

# THE CHILDREN OF LIGHT

*Books by*  
**GERALD SYKES**

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**THE NICE AMERICAN  
THE CENTRE OF THE STAGE  
THE CHILDREN OF LIGHT**

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*by*

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To  
OUR NEW BILINGUALS



Incidents and people encountered elsewhere have reassembled themselves, somewhat to my surprise, in an imaginary part of Ohio, not far from my old Kentucky home, and the result is, needless to say, entirely fictional.



## PART ONE

### I

NEAR-BY flowed the stream called beautiful in song. Water to put out the fire. A cobblestone apron fell away to the yellowish river from a wooden house that had been flooded in spring-time but now in the autumn popped and snorted like a dry log. Above the cobblestones rose a once dreamy river town, with blue spires, that each year became a larger, steelier, smokier accessory in the making of automobiles. The editor of the Trimble (Ohio) *Times* wondered why it gave the visitor from New York such an advantage to sit in the seat of the scornful.

The window was blowing smoke rings. A spasmodic draught within the medallion-like house had turned disaster into a joke. Instead of submitting quietly to its death, the white-shingled antique, one of the oldest in the not-so-old town, was going up in laughter. Its blackened sills and bulging cornices had curved into a smile while rubber-booted men in helmets pole-axed its elegant front door and took aim with brass nozzles.

Danny Greenup, the editor of the *Times*, wondered how Rudenko, the writer from New York, was able to get away with an arrogance that would have meant his ruin in a small place like Trimble.

Red-eyed and coughing, a woman appeared as soon as the front door had fallen, with a large green imitation leather folio under her arm. On it was stamped in gold CLIPPINGS. She wore gold mesh slippers, a pleated night-gown that looked unmussed and unworn, and a white rayon dressing-gown that went well with her poodle-cut pale blonde hair and imitated a priest's benediction robes—and a style that had been smart a year earlier in silk. The robe parted as expertly over her thighs as if she stood on the cover of a

paper-back novel, instead of on the threshold of her father's house, but she quickly re-dressed the exposure and accepted the hand of an eager fireman who helped her over swelling rubber adders and through a white picket fence that had been systematically demolished.

The scene disgusted Danny Greenup. Even the excitement of a fire in Trimble's oldest, most beautiful, most unrespectable section, on the cobblestone banks of the Ohio, did not please him. Old wounds had been opened by the visit of the openly contemptuous magazine writer, and a news event that would have been dramatically agreeable, however painful humanly and architecturally, was now only a source of irritation. He turned his wrath, however, towards the woman, not the writer.

"Her publicity!" he jeered. "Her mother had to rescue the baby. But she changed her night-gown and saved her clippings."

"Wonderful!" growled Rudenko, a massive bluebeard who walked as if he had corns. And once again his enthusiasm for every sign of human frailty was puzzling. He seemed to love disintegration, as if it confirmed some private theory.

"I wonder if she keeps the clippings about the vice raid?"

Rudenko merely looked at him with disgust.

He had done it before. He had done it in the morning when Danny had taken him to police court and made the mistake of sympathising with a coloured housebreaker. Apparently humanitarianism was not in literary fashion any more. In the dingy court-room, decorated with the Red, Grey, and Blue, Rudenko had sneered. And later with unerring instinct he had known how to make Danny feel like a hired guide, merely because he had insisted on paying for lunch. Not only had he shown no gratitude for the tour of the city that was given him free—and he needed it for his article—he had continually, and not always silently, needed.

A strange man, Rudenko, a former revolutionary who now apparently stood to the right of Westbrook Pegler.

A child of the tenements who seemed more spoiled than any millionaire's son. He would throw a tantrum if you didn't agree with him fast, and then despise you for giving in. "So we're feeling sorry for the underprivileged now, are we?" he had said of the coloured housebreaker. "Jail them and sterilise them, that's the only way to treat that kind of vermin. Nothing's safe while they're running around." It was really amazing, an ex-Commie who talked like a Blimp, a savage Blimp, a merciless Blimp.

"I guess he *will* do the same thing again when he gets out," Danny had admitted.

"Of course he will! He *mustn't* get out, that's the answer!" But there was also a gleam in the eye which said, 'You poor idiot, why did you give in to me so fast?'

Danny hated him. He also admired him. He had enjoyed his book. He knew that anyone who had written so sensitively of Yeats and Joyce, who were Danny's favourite authors, couldn't possibly be as awful as he seemed. And couldn't possibly enjoy his new job with a big magazine that he must despise. And couldn't possibly be as untroubled as he let on about the loss of the first-rate little magazine that he had founded and edited. There was a painful mess somewhere in his life, and he was covering it up.

Also, why did he take such a schoolboy's interest in Rosemary Bauer? And why write so many notes? He couldn't possibly need her for his story.

"She was a drum majorette?" Rudenko asked, jotting something on a wad of newsprint with a heavy black pencil.

"Yeah. Trimble High."

"Hah! They wear shakos and white doeskin jackboots with tassels." He sounded like an intellectual who took *Life* seriously.

"Can't afford doeskin. Our boots are made of rubber." Impressed by the journalistic amateurishness discernible amid genuine literary professionalism, Danny stepped back to scan the wad of newsprint, on which was written in an adolescent hand, "Good girl until she went to N.Y. Tried

get job TV. Hat-check Copa. Modelling so-called. Photographs. Black panties, bra, garters. Behind bars in gun-moll story.' Aside from being further impressed by so many notes that had nothing to do with a political story, Danny was appalled to discover how much he himself had revealed about poor Rosemary, who began to seem like a Mid-western Nana instead of a dumb kid who had just set fire to the house by smoking in bed.

"Why write so much about her?" It was the first time Danny had taken the offensive. "I thought you came here to interview Jac—— John Peyton Trimble?"

"Oh, she interests me more than the Ambassador ever did." The absurd defence became an attack. "Who's he, after all, but a State Department stuffed shirt?"

"That's the last thing you could say about——"

"Stuffed shirt," Rudenko repeated with assurance that any attack on any diplomat was justified—and with a glare that this time failed to frighten Danny. "I guess I've got enough about her." He mumbled his further notes with some pride, "Vice raid, dog whip found in her hand, welts on aged financier's back, suspended sentence, illegitimate baby, goes back to mom to have it in hick town, father a G.I. already married, fake wedding-ring, neighbours' questions. Perfect! Now, introduce me!"

"I don't know her," Danny lied.

"She spoke to you! Introduce me!"

He was such an *overpowering* spoiled child that Danny would have had to give in if a long and old black Packard had not driven up at that moment, with a policeman on its outmoded running-board, a policeman shouting at the firemen to make way for it. It was the only car that had been permitted inside the fire lines.

"Here's someone I'll introduce you to," said Danny, after deciding that his boss wouldn't mind. "The brother of the Ambassador. *Brent Trimble*."

It worked. Immediately Rudenko lost interest in Rosemary, and for the first time all day looked impressed. "*Brent Trimble*," he said with a respect he had not shown while



discussing the Ambassador, It was a respect that Danny shared, though he didn't like to admit it.

Together they started towards the richest man in Trimble, who had come to see what was happening on the waterfront, nearly all of which he owned. The ex-Communist lunged ahead of Danny, thrusting him into a panting red fire-truck although he was every bit as big as Rudenko and much stronger.

As usual when he encountered such a display of godless materialism and its effect upon behaviour, Danny feared he was committing a mortal sin by not going to mass any more. If only he could be reconciled to the old faith! He still crossed himself in the dark, when his wife was asleep, but it was three years since he had set foot in church and more than ten since he had made his Easter duty. Of course he'd get around to it some day, before it was too late, but meanwhile his children were growing up as Methodists, and maybe he himself was getting as monstrous as he thought Rudenko was. (Could he really be as bad as he seemed?)

A shout from firemen warned that the roof was about to fall in. Red-gold flames appeared for the first time, to confirm the smoke and dry crackle. An October wind that might prove dangerous blew up from the river. A child in arms, on the far side of the fire-lines, held up its hand to the wind, as if hailing an invisible god. Other children skipped for joy, now that the fire was sure to be catastrophic. At a bend in the river, to get a closer view of the excitement, a white-paddled houseboat, somewhat like a small-scale copy of the *Robert E. Lee*, which Brent Trimble had had built and named after his daughter Sue, came into view like an imperturbable swan.

**R**UDENKO wanted to do an especially good job this time. He knew he was better fitted for literary essays or book reviews than for political reportage, but he felt he could also make good in a kind of writing that was still new

to him. He had to, he needed the money. The trouble with being a leg man, however, was the people you had to meet. The bores, the windbags, the bleeders. The local editor, for instance.

Rudenko couldn't even remember his name, he was such a nonentity. All Rudenko knew about him was that he had failed as a freelance writer in New York, where his wife had done better than he, and now had crept back to his job in Trimble, which had been given him chiefly because his father had also had it. He had said so himself. He hadn't even made good as a football player. He had played only one season with Notre Dame, and even then he had to be taken out of every game, he got injured so easily. And when he played against Army he broke his hip and never was able to play again. A big body shouldn't be so sensitive. Nothing more ridiculous than an *oversize* bleeding heart. And when he tried to talk books, how much Joyce and Yeats meant to him because his mother had been born in County Mayo, he merely uncovered the sentimentality that had made him unfit for big-time competition. A might-have-been on whom no sympathy should be wasted. One more Irish casualty in the battle of New York. They couldn't take it: thick skulls and tender minds. Peasants who pretended to be middle class. Thomistically rationalised fear of reality. Not to mention the ritual castration that occurred in the confessional.'

An example of the local editor's dumbness: he didn't even know that John Peyton Trimble, whom he stupidly, New Dealishly idolised, was being eased out of town by his own brother. In the same way that he had been eased out of the presidency of Trimble College and then eased off the faculty. An outsider knew more of what was happening behind the scenes in this city of 60,000 than the editor of its only newspaper. When the time was ripe the news would be broken to him by the owner of the paper—Brent Trimble of course. The truth, however, had leaked as far as New York, where it was also known that the ex-Ambassador's son had a lot more political talent than his father, as well as

a lot more soundness about the issues of the day, and was going to be sent to Congress in the coming election.

Rudenko moved forward eagerly to meet Brent Trimble, the man who was executing such a brilliant stroke with such finesse. He knew exactly what he wanted from Brent Trimble, who was the reason he had been almost frantic to get this assignment. If he hit it off with Brent Trimble, he might get a job with him—public relations or perhaps speech-writing—and then he could say good-bye to his magazine job, which was tiding him over a bad spell but wasn't really right for him.

Rudenko didn't notice that he had shoved the local editor against a fire-truck in his eagerness to get to Brent Trimble. He was annoyed, however, when the local editor was slow in catching up with him, to make the introduction.

Rudenko studied Brent Trimble with a sigh beneath his eagerness. The open, blue-eyed smile, the well-tanned skin, the disciplined, thin-lipped mouth, the *old* expensive clothes were exactly what he had once hated most, as symbols of Anglo-Saxon overlordship. And when the blue eyes turned towards him they became icy; they registered the fact that he came of immigrant stock, and of unfrightened immigrant stock. A shock of competition passed between the two men.

That, however, was no serious handicap. That kind of xenophobia, in fact, once you got used to it and didn't mind it, could be turned to advantage; its possessor could be made to feel guilty about it. Even the toughest big shots were secretly ashamed of racism, and it could be used against them. Also, these particular hostile eyes could be made to see how useful this particular 'foreigner' could be to them.

Rudenko sighed nonetheless as he went into battle. It was a long time since he had had to cope with this sort of thing, since he had had to ingratiate himself with someone who instinctively hated him. For sixteen years he had been boss of his own magazine and had lived in a professional world where such primitive sentiments were almost extinct, or at least not expressed. Now he sighed and went to work. "I've looked forward to meeting you for a long time, Mr.

Trimble," he said in a loud, clear voice, once handshakes had been exchanged—Brent Trimble sitting in his car and introducing a State Department man at his side, which confirmed the rumour in New York that a new ambassadorship was to be offered his brother, to get him out of the way—"I've looked forward to meeting you for a long time. I've read every speech of yours I could lay my hands on. You're one of the few people in this country who really know what's going on."

Brent Trimble laughed nervously. "You mean somebody reads those things?" As usual there was a surprising amount of bumpkin beneath the tycoon.

"A lot more people than you think."

The cold blue eyes looked differently at him now. The first part of the job had been done. Any merit in the speeches was carefully disavowed of course, and the suggestion made that someone else had helped with 'whipping them into shape', but from that moment forward there was no more hostility. A beach-head had been established on a very important coast.

It was such a long time since Rudenko had had to go out and do this kind of job that it was hard for him to believe that he was doing it well. The departure of Doris had wobbled his confidence. He had been so profoundly scared, in fact, that it would take him a long time to get over the terror of poverty that made him shake all over sometimes at night. He had never expected Doris to leave him. Too late he realised he should have bound her to him with a child.

For years he had been one of the most fortunate literary men in America—with a wife who could support his magazine while it made an unassailable position for itself in New York, London, and Paris. Nobody liked the name of the *Scythian Review* but himself, and even he loudly protested against it and invited something better, but by skilful seamanship in all kinds of intellectual weather, during one of the most changeable periods in history, it had been guided safely from Stalinism to Trotskyism, to Freudianism,

to Henry Jamesism, to Sartrean Existentialism, to Kafkan symbolism, to Eliot's royalism, to Scythian Scythianism, until it was generally recognised as the leader in its broken field. Its enemies might protest that it had introduced street-fighting methods into what was supposed to be a gentle art, that later through a strange development it had got steadily duller and more professorial, that it decided before reading them how books were to be reviewed, that it preferred young writers to ask its permission before they went ahead with their own projects; still, it had become a national institution, the symbol of the very toughest in American intellectuality, until last spring it had suddenly ceased publication.

It really gave Rudenko pleasure to meet Brent Trimble. This was the kind of astuteness that he now wanted to model himself on. If he had had Brent Trimble's sense, he would not be in the position of having to go to work for other men—and what idiots!—at forty-six. He had spent enough time with the Social Register family of Doris to know that the only people who count at all in America are the very rich. Sometimes their conversation got a little dull, but listening to it was an occupational hazard of all those who wanted to get anywhere, who had the intelligence to perceive that few things of intellectual distinction are done without their aid, that inevitably good books, good music, good paintings call upon them, and that politically they are the quiet managers of a brawling sideshow whose roar deceives only the very naïve. Whenever he recalled his youthful radicalism he shuddered. So much energy wasted on a lost cause! Instead of trying to rationalise his identity with the underdogs, simply because he had been born one of them, instead of trying to make a sacred cause out of mere bad luck, he should have recognised his situation sooner and started making money. He would have, too, if he had not been cursed with a good mind.

He had known all this years ago, and found his solution in his marriage—until Doris had foolishly taken exception to a harmless affair he had had with a flaxen-haired Wellesley

girl who, ridiculous snob, wanted to write a book review for the *Scythian*. Not only had he had to re-write entirely the wretched review, he had lost a good house in Dutchess County, an apartment in Sutton Place, all his books, and all his clothes. Doris had never minded any of the other girls, but for some perverse reason she had taken an exception to this one, because she had gone to Wellesley herself, and so when he was away on a lecture trip in New England she had brooded stupidly, *given away* everything that belonged to him, and gone to Europe. Even his neck-ties! All the property of course was in her name. He had nothing now. The last issue of the *Scythian* had appeared in May. New backers could not be found. He was starting all over again—with a rented typewriter and cotton handkerchiefs.

"I understand I'll see you tonight at my brother's," Brent Trimble was saying with a politeness that meant that the fish was sniffing at the bait. Politeness: always a sign of weakness.

"I wouldn't miss it for anything," Rudenko said with emphasis. "I have a lot of questions I want to ask you."

"I thought you were interviewing *him*."

"You're the man I really want to talk to." And it was immediately clear that this was the most flattering remark he could possibly have made.

At that moment, unfortunately, while he was thinking of more of the same, they were interrupted by a red-nosed imbecile in a white and gold cap emblazoned with crossed nozzles who saluted Brent Trimble with a flourish and told him that the fire would be restricted to one building and even there was now being brought under control. "You needn't worry, sir, we've got it down. Ten minutes from now we'll be spitting in its eye."

"Good, Chief. Well, Dr. Pomeroy, let's get a move on. I'll drop you at your hotel," Brent Trimble said to his State Department companion, who had been sitting unnoticed at his side. The fact that he had driven to the airport himself to meet Dr. Pomeroy was part of the systematic unpretentiousness that led him to drive an old car, although his

factory made batteries for new cars. It also confirmed the rumour in New York that he had contributed to the Truman campaign in '48 as well as to the Dewey campaign, and now that he wanted something from the Administration was making sure that he got it. Dr. Pomeroy was being brought to Trimble to make sure that Mr. Ex-Roving Ambassador took the new job that was being offered him, and Brent Trimble had met him himself at the airport to see that no hitch developed in his plans.

Dr. Pomeroy said, "Thank you very much indeed, Mr. Trimble," in a Southern accent. He had the do-gooder look of the most ridiculous kind of New Dealer, a chrysanthemum head of greying black hair, a body grown fat on the gravy train, and behind his professional courtesy the challenging air of an evangelical preacher and an opinionated college professor. His name had been prominently associated with the idiotic Point Four programme that had been announced a year earlier, in 1949, by Truman during his inauguration. Pomeroy had written a mish-mash of a book about the superiority of spending our money on works programmes in Asia to spending it on airplanes. He was a type that now bored Rudenko intensely: a Southern liberal, once the president of a small college in Georgia, who was getting a lot of publicity because he advocated racial equality and let negroes into his classes. What a phony! Well, at any rate, Brent Trimble would never cotton to him. No reformer would ever be liked by one of the ruggedest individualists in the whole N.A.M.

As soon as Brent Trimble had backed his car outside the fire-lines and driven away, Rudenko turned to the local editor, who had said nothing while the owner of his newspaper spoke. A typically Irish farce! A pretence of proud Fenian independence; an attempt to overlook the fact that he was caught hopelessly in the canned editorial rat-race and couldn't even come out against TB without the consent of his boss.

"Introduce me to her!"

But the editor was free to disagree with Rudenko, and so

he did, the stubborn fool. "If I'm going to take you out to the college, I'd better do it now."

"Introduce me!"

"Sorry. I've got to get back to the office."

No amount of pressure would budge him. Rudenko resigned himself to resuming his tour of duty, although actually he knew as much now about the town as he ever wanted to know. The woman in the white dressing-gown, the drum majorette, was still standing with her family, staring dully at the fire she had caused, when the editor drove him away. He would have sworn she wanted to be picked up. Perhaps he would go back later. She must be dying to get away from her brat. They always did.

3

NO one would have guessed it from the scowl on the cheeks that he had to shave twice daily or from the sag that had grown more pronounced in his suety, bent body since the loss of his magazine, but Rudenko was having a good time. The visit to the Middle West, where he had never been before, had given him bucolic pleasures that his stern Marxist training had not prepared him for. He could understand now why his gunman brother, Al, after sticking up a gas-station, had gone by preference to a dairy farm in the Catskills rather than to the nightspots of West Third Street. To be among truly simple people, to drink milk, to glimpse fields on the edges of streets was not as contemptible as it had seemed. And in his own case it was a relief to be spared the loss of face he had suffered with the folding of the *Scythian*.

Even before then he had suffered from the intrigues that invariably accompanied the good reviews that his magazine granted only as part of a careful plan, the heavy drinking that had to accompany good editing, as well as from the savage verbal pogroms and the calculated silences that strategy demanded. But it was particularly refreshing to be away from the incredibly critical New York editor who was



now his boss, who filled his dreams with smoking mountains of excrement; away from daily fantasies of suicide; away from the Luce writers and *New Yorker* men who now for the first time dared to sneer at him; and move among faces that, despite neon signs and billboards and movie stills and chain stores and New York slogans, still gleamed with innocence. A few more days of this and he would feel a resurgence of that sensibility that had originally distinguished him and that, according to his enemies, had been coarsened by a Johnsonian greed for belletristic power.

When you allowed yourself to look at it, the city was beautiful. He especially enjoyed the back streets that he saw from the editor's new car as they drove a mile or so to Trimble College.

He didn't care any longer for the switch-engines puffing slowly towards shining new factories, or the smoke wafting from tall beer-bottle brick chimneys, or the solid blocks of workers' automobiles parked near-by. What he liked now was less obviously impressive. Sheets and torn underwear on clothes-lines, fan-shaped rocking-chairs, an airborne æolian harp, broken kiddiekars, abandoned teetertotters took him back to the warmth and dignified disaster of Rivington Street. A dull gleam from a pickle jar in a store window almost brought tears to his eyes, and the smell of corned beef restored momentarily his mother ironing his first long trousers on a board wadded with thick, scorched sheeting. The caged circular shaft of a gas-house evoked the tender, memorable day when he refused to play handball with the morgue attendant who had raped his sister—because he had just discovered *The Waste Land*.

His anxious heart had been taken by surprise, and he wanted to indulge it, but the local editor was behaving like the twirp he had already shown himself to be. "Guess I'll have to drop you here," he warned as they came to the very quiet college. "Got to get back to the office. Woman has a genuine two-headed calf in her backyard. Going to bring him in. Wants us to photograph him. Ah! Here's someone who can show you around." He pointed to a handsome

man in a dark-blue flannel shirt and rough unpressed grey flannel trousers who was near an old-fashioned black horse-head hitching post and watering trough standing on the pavement outside the Georgian main building of the college, which had 1852 cut into its cornerstone. For a moment Rudenko thought the stranger resembled a picture he had seen of the man he had come to interview, but on closer examination the stranger was much better-looking, about ten years younger, and had none of the stuffiness in the Ambassador's face.

"Who's he?" he asked cautiously.

"Ever hear of psychopolitics?"

"Psychopolitics. What's that?"

"New science. Does for government what psychosomatics does for medicine. He started it." The editor had been inching the car towards the man in the blue shirt, who looked, at least in apparel, more like an artisan than a scientist. "Oh, Professor! Oh, Professor Arbuthnot! Hello! I want you to meet Mr. Rudenko. Mr. Rudenko is a New York writer—very distinguished—who has come all the way out here to interview that great man, John Peyton Trimble."

As soon as Rudenko got out of the car and shook hands with Professor Arbuthnot, the editor said, "I've got to run along. Thought you might show Mr. Rudenko around the place. Well, good-bye, Professor! Good-bye, Mr. Rudenko." And obviously amused by his malicious trick of throwing an unlikely pair together, the editor drove his no doubt heavily mortgaged hot-rod off in a cloud of small-town, practical-joke humour.

"You can't do anything about a punk," Rudenko observed grimly.

Arbuthnot snorted with unprofessorial laughter. "You mean Danny Greenup?"

"Is that his name?"

"Yes." With surprise, "Don't you know it?"

"I made a point of forgetting it."

"Oh, you'd like him if you knew him better."

"Never! The only way he could oblige me would be to have a heart attack."

"Come, come, these are Renaissance emotions."

This remark confirmed an impression that Rudenko had had on first seeing the Professor: at last in this smoke-filled pastureland he had met a man whom he liked.

"What are psychopolitics?"

"Some other time. I'm waiting for two young ladies." There was something both courtly and dashing about the professor. His accent was American of the new kind that had been softened by travel—gentle, well-bred, international.

"They sound phony to me."

"They should be here any minute. I think you'll find they're real."

"No, your politics. Just exactly what do you mean by——"

"Rudenko. Where have I heard that name? Aren't you the editor of a magazine?"

"I *was* the editor of a magazine. We couldn't afford to go on."

"Of course. The *Scythian*. Some of my best students read it."

"What about yourself?"

"Oh, I read it too. But I've been busy. Not much time lately. It scared the wits out of my students. You really hit on something there. Intellectual terrorism. Exactly the right way to exploit our cultural shakiness. Militant high-browism. The only way to impress the middlebrow. Makes him think he is missing something. And of course he is."

Rudenko was delighted; he had not expected anything like this in a provincial college he had never heard of before. "You're not saying anything against the middlebrow? That's sedition."

Professor Arbuthnot went right on, though rather elliptically, as if thinking out loud. "But of course everything can be put into a formula. The advance guard too. You created a sort of advance-guard academy on the ruins of the little magazines that were not so shrewd, not so terroristic.

Still, we need institutions, even anti-institutional institutions. Sorry I didn't hear about your financial difficulties. I'd have tried to raise some money for you."

"That's very kind. But what do you mean, 'academy'——?"

"Sorry! Have to run along now. Nice to meet you!" And Rudenko, to his surprise, found his hand being squeezed by Professor Arbuthnot, who greeted two extraordinarily beautiful girls, one dark, the other fair, in smart-looking dresses that contrasted oddly with his rough clothes, whom he guided to a new grey Ford sedan, its back-seat loaded with groceries and mail.

"Good-bye!" the Professor called gaily again, as he drove away, just as if he had not been studiously insulting a moment before, and Rudenko was left in a foul humour on the tacky campus of a college he had no wish to see, a mile or more from the rest of town, while his corns began to hurt and he wished he had not liked, and did not still like, the Professor as much as he did. He started back to town, limping slightly, glad to get away from the odiously handsome elms among which a few sheep-like students grazed, in the few years of grace left them before they went into the industrial abattoir, and hoped that the girl in the white dressing-gown would still be watching the ruins of her father's house on the waterfront. She wouldn't have any place to sleep: maybe he could induce her to come to his hotel. She looked like the kind that would be glad to leave the baby with her mother, in some relative's drab hutch.

What a farce! Just when he was beginning to enjoy the place, just when he was getting ready to give the people around him some of the affection that he had in such abundance, if they only knew, the editor had played a filthy trick on him and then the Professor had disappeared.

As he walked away from the campus he thought of the most withering words he could find to dismiss it for ever in his article. Tacky? High-schoolish? Scrub-ivy? No, none of them would hurt half enough.

THE name of the dark-haired girl who got into the car with the Professor was Dolores Martinez. In New York, however, before she enrolled at Trimble College, her nightclub name had been Dolores Martin, glued in tinsel on to hand-printed noticeboards just off Sheridan Square. Though twenty-one, she was a freshman, and so new in her rôle of student that it disturbed her greatly to see a bluebearded face that she seemed to recall from Greenwich Village. For a moment Manhattan threatened to return like a spectre to menace the peace she had found in her mother's birthplace and in the college that her mother had not been able to attend. But almost immediately her host, who gave her a pleasant sense of protection, waved good-bye to the ghostly Bluebeard, and she was able to feel again the uncomplicated excitement of going away for a week-end. It was an excitement that she had never experienced before, although she should have had it years ago. For the first time in her life she was living the way co-eds were supposed to live, in books and movies. She must be careful to do the right thing and never let anyone suspect how nervous she felt. That would be hard. She hadn't been so sick with anxiety since the time, when she was sixteen, just before she sang the Creole songs on the Arthur Godfrey amateur programme on TV and got her first chance to sing for money.

The week-end meant so much to her that she had gone to seven o'clock mass and lit a candle afterwards, to make sure she did the right thing. The early morning sun shining through the stained-glass blue of the Virgin's robes, the murmured office, the sudden chanting of '*Dominus vobiscum*', the new meaning of '*per omnia sæcula sæculorum*', the incense, the bell at Eucharist time, the holy water touched from yellow marble to forehead and breast while ageing women in sweaty black dispersed into the street to go to breakfast: the reassuring ritual had worked its tranquillising magic once again.

Unfortunately, preparations were being made outdoors for a funeral at a later mass, and flowers had already arrived, and among them were roses, and so she had been reminded of her mother's death. But this time they had not distressed her, and slipping off the crimson kerchief she had used to cover her head—it went well with her black hair and her black sweater—she had time to get breakfast at The Shack, greet other early-rising students, and read up on colloids—which she didn't understand at all—for her *eight-thirty* class in Plant Biology.

It was too bad she was a freshman; if she had been in college the year before she would have had a chance to take a course with her host. The other kids still talked of what a wonderful lecturer he had been. Gaby said he was by far the most brilliant man in the college. Too bad he wasn't going to be there any more. Dolores would have liked not only to listen to his lectures but to get to know him. Now, as she sat on the front seat of his car, between him and Gaby, while they talked and she kept silent, she was glad once again that she had such an enterprising room-mate. Without Gaby she would never have had a chance to meet such a famous man. Without Gaby she would not be going away on her first week-end.

"Why did he call you Professor Somessing?" Gaby asked. "Arbussnot?"

. "Oh, it was just a joke."

"Why should you make jokes wiss him?" Gaby quizzed him as if he were a helpless child, although he must have been more than twice her age. He looked somewhere between forty-five and fifty, with hair greying to soften the crowsfeet.

"I didn't."

"Who did?"

"Somebody else."

"I don't ssink you should make jokes wiss a man like ssat. I never saw him before, but I don't trust him. You should have nossing"—words with 'th' gave Gaby trouble, although her English was almost perfect—"to do wiss him."

"You should have told me sooner. He's coming to dinner tonight."

"Oh, ssat will be wonderful! I want to see his *expression*. When he finds out who you really are."

"I don't think it will bother him. He's a very intelligent man."

"Intelligent, yes, but——" Gaby searched her intuitions.

"What do you hear from home? What about the riots in Casablanca?"

"Ah, ssat is a mess. I don't talk about messes. Anyway, I dc.n't ssink about politics, now you have deserted us."

"I didn't desert you. They didn't renew my contract. That's a polite way of firing you."

"I know, I know! But you could have fought back!"

"When I have all day now to work on my book?"

"You were *égoïste*. You will suffer!"

"What about the riots?"

"No! You leave me, I leave you! I don't care anyssing about politics now."

"I hear you're going to sing Carmen some day, Miss Martinez," he said unexpectedly to Dolores.

"Who? Me?" It was all she could think of to say.

"Gaby tells me you have a wonderful voice."

"She has!" said Gaby.

"And that you are the most beautiful girl on the campus."

"She is!"

"And that you know my son."

There was a suspicious silence from Gaby, and Dolores felt she had to answer, though she was still too nervous and too much impressed by the Ambassador to be able to think straight when he spoke to her. "Yes," was all she could say, and almost inaudibly.

"What do you think of him?"

"Why, I—— He's very nice."

"Nice. That's a word I never heard said of him before."

"Well, I mean——"

"Nice. Do you think Hank is nice, Gaby?"

"I ssink he is awful." Gaby pronounced it 'oweful'.

"You never were fair to him."

"I saw what he did to you."

"You don't really think *he* did it."

"Everyone knows he did it."

"Then I ought to be grateful to him. I'm much happier now."

"What about me? I *miss* you."

"I'll bet none of the other students feel that way."

"Yes, ssey do! All of ssem."

"You see, Miss Martinez? She knows just what I want to hear. I'm glad you find my boy nice. I have a weak spot for him too." Dolores wondered anxiously what information Gaby had given him about the two times she had seen Hank. After all, Hank *was* married and had a child, and his father might think she—she hoped he wouldn't think that. "But I don't always trust him. Gaby's right, he *can* be oweful. Of course it's only because he's in politics, but——"

She liked him less when he said it. A father shouldn't say a thing like that about his son, even if he was, as he seemed to be, giving her some kind of warning. And then there was something just a little too smooth in the way he diplomatically changed the subject, almost as quickly as he had brought it up, and asked her if she found it boring to live in Trimble.

"Oh no."

"But I would think that after New York you'd find it hard to live in such a small place."

"Oh, I like it here."

"It's not too quiet?"

"Oh no."

"Well, I knew your mother, and I'm sure she'd be glad you came to Trimble. You're one student who really belongs here."

While he spoke he turned the car up a woodland lane that was occasionally lighted by the direct rays of an autumn sun that had dropped not far from the horizon. Most of the trees still had their leaves, and they had turned red or yellow or brown with a brilliance that saddened her, in some





mysterious way she did not understand. A rabbit, startled by the car, hid itself in a thick forest, and she wished that so simple a way out were also open to her. If she were only a rabbit, there would be no more uncertainty about what to say next; she would not even care what Mr. Trimble thought about her mother. She would not wish that she had stayed in her room and just studied the whole week-end, or that she did not have to get up and face people every morning, or that she had stayed on in the one kind of life where she had got over her terrors, or that she was quick of wit and coquettish like Gaby.

"Do you hate to go to new places? I do," said Mr. Trimble. "Week-ends are much harder on guests than on hosts. The things you have to say! It's barbarous."

She felt better. By describing her adventure as an ordeal he had turned it into an adventure again. She stopped worrying whether she had brought the right clothes and enjoyed the enormous house that he had now driven up to. It was the most beautiful house she had ever seen: even if she had been writing a theme, there was no other way to describe it. She had no idea what kind of architecture it was, and she was afraid to open her mouth to praise it, for fear she would say something stupid. But it was every bit as beautiful as Grant's Tomb. And almost as big.

5

GABY always enjoyed a visit to the Trimble house. She had been over a year in America now, and she already knew enough about it to realise that Augusta Trimble was not the kind of woman one could expect to find in the Mid-West. Even in London and Paris she had been considered a painter of rare distinction—she had shown in the very best galleries and received extraordinary reviews which she kept in a handsome folder—and in Ohio she was a god-send to a French girl who wanted stimulating companionship while she completed her education and strategic introductions when she began her career a year later in New

York. Gaby's father had been the mayor of a small city not far from Algiers, in North Africa, but during the war he had made the mistake of siding with Marshal Pétain rather than General de Gaulle—a mistake that was ultimately to lead to his own suicide and to Gaby's shrewd decision to move to America.

She had had to work hard in Algiers to get her chance, and the third-rate scholarship that she finally wrung from the American consulate, which of course had a dossier on her father, had been the product not only of her outstanding record as a student at the University of Algiers but of years of patient and abject politics, when she repeatedly made known her detestation of Communism, also denounced the Fascists, went almost daily to the American library, acquired almost faultless English, listened to ignorant complaints about the inferiority of France, translated an American literary article for a French magazine, refused to take any money for it, and was always nice to American officials. If she had been older she might have disliked her struggle, but she was twenty-one and she had rather enjoyed it and now she was determined to see that it paid off. She was a small girl with fine-spun fair hair and a pointed chin; her tiny limbs had been assembled with a watchmaker's precision; and she seemed to tick-tock with clear-headed, clear-spoken purpose—which did not prevent her from enjoying the good things of life as she moved untiringly towards re-acquisition of the money and prestige that her father had lost through one wrong decision. She liked good food, good wine, good talk, good paintings, good furniture, good walls, and she got all of them when she was Augusta's guest. The nearest thing she had to a sweetheart was a French instructor named Tommy who lived with his mother and seemed afraid of women.

She had chosen Dolores as her room-mate not only because she too was older than the other girls at college, but because she was restful. Also, Dolores satisfied her maternal instincts. She was *so* helpless. Sometimes Gaby wondered if she understood *any* of the courses she was taking. The

death of her mother had brought on a nervous breakdown—the poor woman, apparently, had been a prostitute, and had been killed by a negro under particularly sordid circumstances—and Dolores was only slowly recovering her desire to go on living. She had been prevailed upon to take the opportunity that had been offered her by wealthy friends, with the aid of a little insurance money left her by her mother, to seek an education that she naïvely believed would help her as a singer, to live in a town that she felt should have been her home, to repair her nerves, and to get ready for a serious musical career. Actually, the best part of her life in Trimble, as Gaby saw it, was that she was beginning to feel a little easier in her relations with other people, a little less fearful of being socially inept. The schoolgirl front that she had built up during her night-club work, where she had retained more innocence than a school might have permitted, had collapsed with her breakdown, and now it would take some time before she could be happy in the company of others. The will to be innocent was stronger in her than in any girl Gaby had ever met anywhere; it had become ingrained while Dolores shut her eyes to what her mother was doing; the result was that she was still almost a child.

She was also a little proud of her innocence, and sometimes overdid it. On her first day at Trimble she had seen a bird from the Dean of Women's mullioned window. "Look!" she had cried with an enthusiasm no less than she showed for the Seguidilla at the end of Act One of her favourite opera. "It's a bird!"

"Yes," the Dean of Women had said with a dryness that the hard-hit Gaby sometimes also felt at such demonstrations, "a sparrow. I'm afraid you'll have to take at least one science."

Gaby had feared that the elegance of Augusta's home and dress and speech might stir some unfortunate democratic resentment in Dolores, some pork-and-beans, street-Arab hostility. Augusta had invited her sight unseen, on Gaby's recommendation. But Dolores was obviously overcome by the beauty of the house that Augusta had created from a

Victorian horror, though unable to express her admiration, and she also seemed drawn to Augusta, who was capable of unusual maternal warmth, despite her lack of children. With the acidity of the baseborn Dolores was fond of ridiculing a British accent, and sang an amusing song in that accent about Burlington Bertie that she had learned from Pinkie, a dear hoofer friend who had once played the Palace and had not suffered during the death of vaudeville because he could always go back to truss-fitting; but the echoes of London society in Augusta's speech, from her first marriage, did not appear to awaken any righteous American indignation in Dolores, and all went well between them. Also, fortunately, the 'Trimbles' black cat appeared at the door with Augusta to greet the guests, and Dolores was permitted to bestow upon the cat the enthusiasm that her social anxieties prevented her from expressing to her hosts. She took the cat on her lap when they went into Augusta's vast titanium-white studio and soon had it purring with delight, while she herself was delighted to hear that it was a great hunter and that its remarkably thoughtful expression was due, according to Jack Trimble, to 'mouse-guilt'.

This phrase amused Dolores very much. She laughed like an eight-year-old.

Gaby studied her host discreetly. It was easier now that she was no longer riding with him in his car. She knew that she had a crush on him, but she also knew that she must let it neither grow nor show—she liked Augusta too much, and besides there was no chance of getting him. The best thing was to make light-hearted jokes with him, as in the car. Anyway, she was glad to see that he was looking well. His come-down in the community had not affected him—or Augusta—in the way Gaby had expected. She had frankly told them that they would suffer from isolation, just before she left Trimble in June to go to a seashore hotel on Long Island where she had made over eighty dollars a week as waitress and French tutor, and now that the summer was over, and she was seeing them for the first time, she had to admit she had been wrong. They both looked exceptionally

well, and she sensed that they were both on the whole in a good frame of mind. Even so, she hoped that if an offer to get away from Trimble came along—there had been rumours that a new ambassadorship was to be offered Jack—they would take it. Once again in the public eye, they would be much more useful to her; but quite apart from that, she wished it for their own sake. Sooner or later, they would find isolation unendurable. It was strange they hadn't done so already.

She was not able to devote much thought to them, however, because they had an unexpected guest, who had dropped in without telephoning while Jack was away and who was presented to her when she went into the studio. His name was Mr. Thornton, and she was sure she had seen his face before. He was short, quite short, and he had a dark moustache, dark hair that was beginning to need a fancy parting to hide its scarcity, and shoes with hidden high heels. His lizard eyes were pale but very keen. He was white, but he looked as if there might have been negro blood in an ancestor long long ago. It took Gaby several minutes before she realised, and then through some reference to the theatre, that he was Cairo Thornton the playwright, and of course she had seen his face before. He had received about as much publicity as any playwright in America. And he had spent part of his childhood in Trimble, and this was his first trip back to his old home town since he had become world-famous.

He asked a steady stream of questions, and when Jack excused himself to unload the groceries from the car, and Augusta followed him out of the studio—she obviously had some message to deliver to him—the questions turned towards Gaby.

"Do they really live here all year round?" Cairo Thornton asked as soon as they had left, in a class-room whisper. He put down a cup of tea that he had barely sipped.

"Yes." Gaby immediately felt a sense of loyalty to them. She was also mildly annoyed that he showed no interest in Augusta's pictures.

"But why? Why?" His strange first name had been taken from a place in Illinois, she recalled irrelevantly, which rhymed with *faro*—more like the French pronunciation of the city in Egypt than the English.

"Ssey like it." She had asked the same question herself, but now she supplied their answer as if it satisfied her.

"Lady Plowden told me to look her up. You know who she was before she got her divorce and married him, don't you?"

"Yes, I know," Gaby said coldly, dropping the whisper that she had also used for a while, and speaking out loud.

"Why did she do it? Why?" He continued to whisper.

"She loves him."

"Oh yes, of course, but——" this was said as if it were of no consequence, in a way that infuriated Gaby—"but why did they have to bury themselves *here*?"

"Ssey wanted to. Ssey like it here."

"Trimble! Of all places! We slept on the floor. Only it wasn't a floor, it was just mud. Five people and three geese. And when it was dark I could hear Mama and Papa making love. Papa sounded like a pig——"

"Ssey're a little more fortunate. Ssis house would be considered extraordinary even in——" Gaby was saying.

But Dolores, who had been stroking the cat on her lap, interrupted unexpectedly and excitedly, "Say, there's a scene in *White Columns* like that! You wrote that, didn't you? I liked that scene. That was wonderful. You're a very good writer. But *White Columns* was in the South."

"Yes, honey, I lived in the South too. More in the South than in Ohio. But never very far from the Ohio River. Papa just worked here for a while. In the battery plant. So this is what it's like. Wait till I get back to New York! I know his wife. I mean she used to be his wife."

"Whose?" asked Gaby.

"Our host's. Barbara Allen. She——"

"She was sse second one. She wrote nov——"

"She's dying of curiosity! She talked to me about him for three solid hours. I never was so bored in my life. It seems he played some filthy trick on her. She didn't say what it was."

"She was a Communist." Gaby's conscience troubled her, but she had to admit she liked gossip.

"She's an old bag now. I must say he's done better for himself. I got the impression he was falling to pieces. He looks awfully well to me."

"He *is* well. He enjoys life more ssan any man I know."

"Barbara's just mad because he got away from her. She paid a clipping agency to send her everything they could find about him in the newspapers. Pictures of him talking to Nehru or Ben Gurion or the Shah or that fat King of Egypt. She has *albums*. She spilt a bottle of Pernod over one of them. I don't see what she's got to complain about. He must have given her plenty. I wonder if he ever hit her? They quarrelled about the Moscow trials. I know that. He really must have smacked her, she's still talking about him."

"I don't ssink ssat's a reason to admire him."

"Why, *White Columns* won the Pulitzer Prize!" Dolores said.

"Honey, you're beautiful. I knew a boy in Chihuahua with eyes like yours."

"Just think!"

Cairo Thornton said nothing, and Gaby saw, reluctantly, that his success meant little to him, and that he was not pretending. He looked as if, when it had come, it had been a disappointment. He had had to struggle for it, and he would go on struggling for it, because there was something quite tough and determined beneath his effeminacy, but it brought him none of the spontaneous enjoyment that he got from gossip.

"But I liked *The Toy Heron* better. I could have played the girl in that. She was so hopeless. That disease she had——"

"Honey, you couldn't have said anything I liked better."

"What are you writing now?"

"Oh, you know me. With my dim brain I've got to go on writing. I'm doing a new play."

"What's it called?"

"*The Tender Web*."

"Oh, I like that! Is it about love?"

“Naturally.”

He was a gangster, a little fairy gangster, to use the wonderful American slang word for pederasts, thought Gaby bitterly, and there was so much gangsterism in America that it affected even the artists and intellectuals—her father had said that G.I. meant *Gangster International*—but even so she wished that she could talk to Cairo Thornton the easy, friendly way that Dolores found without effort. She had let him antagonise her as a woman. For once Dolores was more mature than she. And she herself would do well to learn her lesson, because the pederasts were so powerful in the art world and the fashion world, and she knew that a French girl had a better chance of making out in those parts of New York than anywhere else. So she had better be more tactful.

“I didn’t see *Sse Toy Heron*, but I liked *White Columns* very much,” she said enthusiastically. “What are you going to do now?”

“Oh, I’m just looking around,” he said wearily. “When I was in Rome I had a fantastic idea that I might find a new play if I came back to Trimble. But when I got off the train it was all so ugly and so strange. And then the hotel was even worse. So clean, so modern. I like little, dark, sinister hotels. I thought there might be somebody to talk to *here*, so I just got in a cab and told the man to take me here. Now come on, tell me about them. Do they really think they can stay *buried* here?”

Gaby realised that she was going to have to gossip about them after all. Fortunately, they came back into the studio just then, Augusta with her arm in Jack’s and looking happy, as if he had reassured her about something.

6

AUGUSTA had been glad of a chance to be alone with Jack, although it meant a rather impolite desertion of her guests. During his shopping tour in town there had been two developments: first, the unannounced arrival of Cairo



Thornton, which was unimportant; second, a telephone call from Sue to say that Hank *would* come to dinner that night, he would be back in Trimble in time, and also he seemed bent on making more trouble for his father. This was a message that had to be communicated to Jack at once. Sue was Brent's daughter, and she had more than once acted as a spy against her father, who had disappointed her—she wouldn't even step aboard the houseboat he had named after her—and against her cousin Hank, whom she despised. It was she who had first let Augusta know that Jack's contract was not to be renewed by the college, last spring, as a result of pressure brought to bear by Hank.

Augusta was troubled. Within a few hours a week-end which had seemed to be like any other had become decisive. The journalist from New York, the official from Washington, the telephone call from Sue—they all made it clear that things were coming to a head. She would have to steer cleverly if she were to keep Jack on the course that she had charted for him and that he said he also wanted. And with savage irony this new problem had developed only a few weeks after she had heard from her doctor that she was 'sure enough' pregnant. This time she meant to have her baby, this time she was determined not to lose it, this time there was going to be no miscarriage. She had lost one other child during her marriage to Jack and two during her marriage to Godfrey, and this time she was going to deliver, even if it meant that she went to bed for the next seven or eight months. She was thirty-five years old, and it was high time. But the doctor had warned her against nervous excitement, and it looked as if, in spite of all her precautions, the retreat she and Jack had chosen in the wilderness, against exactly the kind of intrusion they were now getting, was going to be violated. Why couldn't they leave her alone? Just leave her alone?

The retreat had seemed ideally chosen. She herself had advocated going back to Jack's home town, rather than to her own, which was about a hundred miles away. Her own family had died or moved, while the patriarchal continuation

of the Trimble line in one place had been one more argument for the town named after them. Brent, moreover, in those days, had been eager for his illustrious brother's return, and Hank, at the outset then of his legal and political career, had written that his father's return would help him greatly. The offer from the college and finally her visit to the house, with almost simultaneous plans for what she would do with it, had made up her mind, and she had joined in the chorus of pleas made to Jack, who had held off until she spoke. They had settled in Trimble, they had re-rooted themselves, they had worked hard, they had worked well, they had spent money, they had made friends, they had wanted nothing better. But there had been trouble, there was going to be more trouble, and perhaps all their efforts would prove to have been in vain, and they would have to go away and they would also lose their baby.

Not, however, if she could help it. She was going to fight hard. She had fought hard to break up her stagnant marriage with Godfrey, to get away from Europe, to make a new life with Jack, and she would fight hard to keep the new, wonderful, productive tranquillity they had created together. Her body might be unreliable, her paradoxical body which *looked* so maternal, but years of living among extremely intelligent people and finding out slowly what she wanted—usually the exact opposite of what *they* wanted—had made her mind clear. Her goals were unworldly enough—to paint good pictures that had almost no sale and to raise if possible a family far from the centres of power—but to get what she wanted she would have to summon all the cunning that, like the unjust steward in the parable, she had been able to learn from the children of this world. She had re-read the Bible seriously when she had been in despair about her life in London and when the Oxford Jesuit with silky grey hair, burning eyes, and extraordinary sophistication—ideally equipped, save for one defect, to bring persons like her into the Church—had almost made a Catholic of her, and she was particularly fond of that parable, probably the most difficult passage in the New Testament to interpret,

which had seemed to illuminate both what she had done in the past and what she must do in the future. Together with the books of an extraordinary Frenchwoman, Simone Weil, who wrote prophetically of the need for roots, it had made a profound impression on her, and when Jack had entered her life shortly afterwards she had been ready for him. She had known what she wanted, and it had fitted in almost perfectly with what he wanted.

She always felt better when Gaby came to the house, because Gaby had been given by nature an ecstatic eye and by experience a remarkably cool head. Already, even while she was making conversation with the little playwright, Gaby's eye had sought out the two new pictures that had been painted since her last visit and had begun to study them. The playwright and the singer obviously had no visual sensibility at all, as their embarrassed silence before pictures made clear, but to Gaby a picture was important, and that helped--oh, so much!--especially here. Augusta felt better about deserting her guests, because Gaby was one of them.

And she was glad that Jack was in a *ruddy* mood. She always studied the colour of his face before deciding how to handle him. *Pale* meant introversion, moodiness, difficulty; *ruddy* meant hearty acceptance of almost any new problem and amazing resourcefulness in handling it. Today he had none of the gloomy pigmentation of thought. That alone reassured her.

She caught up with him in the kitchen and walked out with him to the car. "Hank *is* coming tonight."

"O.K."

"He is set on your announcing that you are voting for him."

"Set, eh?" He smiled and started carrying back to the kitchen a large carton marked corn-flakes and filled with meat and vegetables. It was not one of the more trying days when he wished silently he had someone, as in the past, to do such chores for him.

"Sue says he'll be hard to handle."

"He can be handled."

"Brent too."

"Brent too." He had entered the kitchen, while she held the screen-door open for him, and put the groceries on the plain oak table that she had made beautiful merely by scraping its paint off and bleaching it. Now he patted her shoulder and kissed her cheek.

"Did you invite the man who's running against Hank?" she asked.

"Yes."

"Is he coming?"

"Didn't I tell you? With his wife."

"Do you really think it will work out all right?"

"Of course it will work out all right." He patted her again, and just as if she were a child rejoicing in her daddy's strength, she felt confident again. "There isn't anything they can do to us. Not anything!"

"I don't know why I get so nervous. I never got this way before."

"It was the first time I'd been back at the college since—— Am I glad I'm out of there! And remember, whenever I want a job at the school in Washington I can get it. Bill Carter needs somebody to lecture on my area. And he'd prefer to have me. There's absolutely nothing to worry about."

"But I don't want to leave."

"You're not going to have to. That's a promise."

It was so simple, once she spoke to him. She felt stupid at having bothered him at all. But it couldn't really be that simple. There must be something she was leaving out, something very important.

Almost with relief she heard him sigh, though ever so slightly, as he opened the screen-door again—it would have to come down in a day or two and be replaced by a storm door—and went back towards the car for another carton of food. That sigh reminded her of the constant strain, of the constant restlessness he lived with. On the whole he had adjusted himself wonderfully to their isolation, but after

all he was primarily a man of action, and had been one nearly all his life, and provincial retirement had meant not only trivial losses, like doing without servants—and he had had a *lot* of them—but major losses, like doing without large well-known issues and favourable publicity and general encouragement. Almost nobody approved of what he was doing now; he had to live alone with naked principles; he had to swim up-stream against a flooded river of public opinion; he also had to make his thoughts as important—above all, to himself—as deeds would have been.

It had been childish of her to imagine for a moment that she could have complete confidence in him, much as she wanted to. He was cruelly divided and therefore cruelly unreliable. He did his best to live by his new lights, but just about half of his complex mind had another allegiance. Like almost every man of action, he wanted a job to be given him; he didn't want to have to create it for himself. He was dependent on society to make demands of him. And now he had to create his own demands.

"I'll come with you," she said.

"No, there's only one more package. Put the meat and the butter in the ice-box."

"Yes, yes." She had forgotten them.

When he brought in the other carton he kissed her again, ran his hand over her breast, bit the lobe of her ear, in a way that recalled the blitz tactics he had used in London, and said fervently, "Let's have some fun tonight! That's the way we'll beat them." And she smiled up at him gratefully and felt ashamed of her doubts. Where would she ever have found any other man who came so close to being just what she wanted? There *wasn't* any other.

When they returned to the studio she received a distinct impression, from the look on Gaby's face, that they had been discussed in their absence. A moment later Cairo Thornton said with a mischievous smile to Jack, "I saw Barbara Allen the other day. She told me she wants a full report on you."

"How is the dear girl?" Jack was diplomatically cagey

with the visitor, though friendly. He had never shown the usual male distaste for effeminate men. But then he enjoyed *everybody*.

"Not much of a girl any more. These Congressional investigations are killing her."

"Good old Barbara. Goes down fighting."

"Oh, they won't investigate *her*. She can't even get published any more."

"She always did have too much spirit for her own good."

"Too much spirits, you mean."

Jack ignored it, and Augusta felt sure that the playwright would not have left it in any finished script. "Barbara is a teacher at heart. She gave me my freshman course in love-making. I had a wife and child, but I was still a mother's boy until I met Barbara. I'll always be in her debt."

"She thinks you still are."

"Oh, there she's wrong. Actually she got a rather high fee, when you think of how little most women get for that sort of thing. It never really was a marriage. I had to wait until now for that. But otherwise I have a very high regard for Barbara." He squeezed Augusta's hand.

"Unfortunately I can't say as much for her feelings about you."

"Of course. I treated her terribly."

"He really was rather mean to her," Augusta said to Gaby and Dolores. "Let it be a lesson to you, girls. Never think you're a widow until you see your husband's corpse. Just imagine, he played *dead*! She thought he really was. They'd been divorced by then of course. So she married someone else and lost all that alimony."

"I don't know what you're talking about," Jack said with a smile.

"Played dead! But don't think you can do it twice!" While she bantered, however, she realised that Jack's desertion of Hank's mother for Barbara was what had caused Hank's hatred of him, which was now the source of most of Jack's troubles.

"Is that what happened?" said Cairo Thornton with delight. "Now I know why she hates you so much!"

"She made some such ridiculous accusations at the time. Of course there's not a word of truth in them. I was very sick. I had a complete breakdown. It was a *bona fide* case of amnesia. I don't know how much of New Mexico and Old Mexico I must have wandered around until——"

"Amnesia!" said Augusta. "That's the only part of it that disappointed me. You should have found something more original than that."

"Amazing," said Cairo Thornton. "I thought I was going to meet one more dull Ambassador, but this is one of the cleverest tricks I ever—you're wonderful!"

"I hope you don't believe anything my wife has been saying."

"Every word. But what I don't understand is how you got such a saintly reputation in the Press when you became an Ambassador—or whatever it was. From what I read you're one of the most popular Americans we ever sent abroad."

"Well, first of all that's not true. And if it were, it would be simply because I got out in time, when I was still liked by both the Arabs and the Israelis, by both the Pak—— You see, I never had to take the blame for our foreign policy. If I'd stayed on longer——"

"No, no. They all talked about your natural sympathy for all kinds of people. A blond American who really liked foreigners and wanted to help them. *And learn from them!* You got a terrific Press. Why——!"

Augusta rubbed her cheek possessively against Jack's, and addressed herself to the playwright. "We're having some just home folks in for supper. Why don't you stay?" She was in a gay mood and didn't want to think of the paternal wrong, inflicted upon Hank, that was now returning to plague Jack.

"I will if you give me a real drink," said Cairo Thornton. "Tea is bad for me. Especially with milk."

"Amnesia!" said Gaby. "Ssat's oweful."

THE full name of the stout man from Washington was J. Wesley Pomeroy, and since he was a Doctor of Philosophy he was called Dr. Pomeroy. When he reached his hotel room, which from the old-fashioned brick exterior of the building he had expected to have a white wash-bowl in which had been set an ironware pitcher of water, he found instead a pink wash-stand, a pink bath-tub, a pink toilet, and chromium-shiny fixtures so sharp that they almost cut his hand. He carefully took off his black jacket and trousers, folded them neatly across a chair, loosened his collar, size 17, and lay down on top of the bed to collect himself. He was glad to get away from Brent Trimble, although he had been flattered by having him meet his plane. The heart-warming attentions also reminded him that he was a kind of errand boy.

The legislation needed for the Point Four programme had finally been passed in June, but no money had yet been appropriated for it by a suspicious and often hostile Congress. The President and the Secretary of State had their hearts set on getting Point Four into operation as soon as possible; it was an essential part of their programme; and they were agreed that the name of Trimble, both because the ex-Ambassador enjoyed such remarkable prestige in the Press and because the manufacturer was a power in the N.A.M., might be the magic they needed. Also, the ever-conservative Brent Trimble, though a Republican, had contributed to the Truman campaign fund in 1948, at a time when not much money was coming in, and this was the first occasion that any request had been made of the Administration in return for a gift that had been merely a hedging of bets that had seemed over-cautious at the time.

The situation was so propitious, in fact, for the appointment of John Peyton Trimble to be one of the leaders, perhaps finally the actual head, of the new American programme for giving technical aid and training to 'backward' countries, that no trip to visit him would have been necessary



if it had not been for one thing: the man himself. He had resigned his roving ambassadorship in Asia some two years earlier, without giving his true reasons, and there were all sorts of rumours in Washington as to what they had been. The man in fact was baffling to everyone who had known him, and the number of conflicting theories about him was exactly as great as the number of his former colleagues.

That he was going to continue to be difficult had been made clear when Dr. Pomeroy telephoned him from Washington, earlier in the week. There had been no acceptance of the offer, no encouragement to make the trip and no invitation, after the trip had been announced, to stay with him in a house that was said to be unduly spacious. The most that Dr. Pomeroy had received had been an invitation to dinner that same evening, and the satisfaction accompanying that had been punctured by the news that quite a few others were also to be there, which meant that there would be no chance for serious talk.

A Bible lay on a Grand Rapids maple desk not far from Dr. Pomeroy's head, and earlier in his career, when he had started as a teacher in Georgia, he might have consulted it for guidance in a singularly difficult problem. Today, still enjoying his emancipation from ancient soothsayers, he merely tried to recall what he had heard about John Peyton Trimble, as a guide to what to expect of him. It was absolutely essential that he take the important job being offered him, and Dr. Pomeroy meant to go back to Washington with his acceptance, both because it would help his own position and because it was so important for the future welfare of the United States.

Good men were what we needed abroad, and everyone agreed that John Peyton Trimble was one of the best unprofessional diplomats we had developed since the war. His chance had come as a result of the war, but before that he had had outstanding success both as an executive of a large oil corporation and as a geophysicist. Apparently, however, he had none of the racial or religious prejudices usually found in men of his background, and when he had

become an ambassador he had made an extraordinary number of friends in Asia. Dr. Pomeroy had met some of them during his last trip to Asia. Probably no American was so clearly identified in the Asian mind with good will towards Asia.

At the same time he was identified in the American mind, even today, with the first successful resistance to Soviet pressure, in Iran, although of course other Americans had played an equally important part in it. Through luck as much as through anything else he had been given popular credit for a firmness which had forced the Iranian Communists to back down in the full glare of publicity, and so he had become a diplomatic hero, which had strengthened his hand immeasurably in Washington. He was in the enviable and almost unique position of being admired both by the flag-wavers and the internationalists on Capitol Hill when, to everyone's amazement, he had resigned.

Some theorists thought he had got too close to the Asians: not only free from prejudice against them, but so deeply interested in their literature and their philosophy that they had swallowed him up. "It was that side trip to India that did it," one man had said in Washington. "He should have been kept in Moslem countries. What a pity! We're a violent people. Either hundred-percenters or theosophists. No in between. Now, Claudel lived in the Orient as a French diplomat, but *he* didn't have to go home and try to think out some Oriental ideas. He just went on to another post. Wherever the Quai d'Orsay sent him. He didn't dream of *resigning*."

Other theorists believed that the resignation had been due to the new wife, whom John Peyton Trimble had met in London on his way back from New Delhi. She was Lady Jerrold then, the wife of Sir Godfrey Jerrold, who had recently been knighted for his services to the Crown as curator of one of the big London art museums. Originally, however, she had been an American and she still had an American passport, on which her birthplace appeared as Lexington, Kentucky, and her maiden name as Augusta

Sterrett. She had met Godfrey Jerrold in the '30s, when he had taught the appreciation of art at the University of Kentucky—a rather pale, pre-Raphaelitish young man, the son of a British painter who had belonged to the Royal Academy and had also been knighted in his day. Godfrey Jerrold had appreciated her, almost as much as he had appreciated Botticelli's Venus, and had carried her back to London, where her beauty and charm and talent, together with his father's reputation and his mother's political connections, had helped him get an appointment that he had no. dreamed of getting before he reached his fifties. The previous curator had buried all paintings by Sir Joshua Reynolds in the damp cellar of the museum because he had taken a dislike to a contemporary member of the Reynolds family, unrelated to Sir Joshua, and this had led to a scandal, charges of madness, and a hurried change of administration.

Augusta Sterrett Jerrold had thus been transferred from a provincial town where ladies sat on front porches and drank lemonade and discussed wheaten biscuits and three-year-old horses to as complex a life as it would have been possible for her to find. She had done well at it, the Washington gossips said, and of course this was a point on which Dr. Pomeroy had to take their word. He had no interest in that kind of life, although of course he could have mastered it and moved freely and knowledgeably in it, if he had chosen to. Look at how quickly he had freed himself from his own intellectual provincialisms. To make a long story short, she had first liked and then disliked London, for some obscure reasons that had to do with her interest in painting and in religion. For she had almost become a Catholic: that much was definitely known. Yet when she had met John Peyton Trimble she had not scrupled to divorce Sir Godfrey Jerrold—charging him, as she had to, under British law, with adultery (which one Washingtonian thought a compliment)—and now Trimble was her second husband, while she was his third wife. And somewhere along the line she was supposed to have persuaded him that he should resign his high office and that

together they should return to the United States and live in retirement.

The more Dr. Pomeroy thought of his problem, the more he believed that it had arisen in the character of this woman. A way must be found to understand the nature of her influence upon her husband. Dr. Pomeroy must exert on her his old Southern charm and his new mental powers. The trouble was that he didn't know nearly enough about husband and wife. What was the best source of information? He recalled suddenly, as he heard a fire-engine clang slowly back to its station house, that he had met the editor of the local newspaper.

As a matter of fact, he had already planned to look up this man. When he had begun his travels for the State Department he had made it a practice to seek out members of his own profession, in the local university, but after a while he had found newspaper editors more informative and quicker. Usually what they said had to be translated into more scientific language, but usually it was to the point. And that was rarely true of university men.

He put on his tidy, sombre garments and went downstairs and bought a copy of the *Trimble Times*. He asked where the *Times* office was, and found it was not far away, and also on Main Street.

While he was passing a chain grocery store with a bright red front, in shiny paint and bargain prices on oleo-margarine and young tom turkeys, he heard a smart trumpet call, and looking down a side street saw an elderly man in a straw hat summoning housewives to the back end of his meat wagon with a few bars of music that sounded vaguely martial. The wagon was as brightly polished as if it belonged to a circus. The sight of this primitive merchandising, next door to a supermarket, attracted the economist in Dr. Pomeroy, and he walked down the side street to enjoy it. Such a scene reminded him pleasantly of his own rise from outworn folk ways.

The name of the meat-seller was printed in gold Gothic letters on the side of his black and green wagon—Theo.

Rolfes—and the dull bronze cross that he wore in the lapel of a bloodstained smock meant he had served in the Spanish-American war. His slightly sway-backed horse looked as old as himself, in horse-time, and also wore, although the sun was no longer strong, a greasy golf cap, pierced to make way for its ears. A strong odour of thyme and other sausage spices came from the interior of the spotless wagon, and most of the meat that Mr. Rolfes measured out on an ancient scale that hung by a chain from the back of his wagon seemed to have been smoked—ham and tongue and bacon, along with blood pudding and chitterlings.

Dr. Pomeroy felt as happy as when he had seen a soda fountain in Athens and an electric tyre pump in Baghdad. "This is beautiful!" he exclaimed to Mr. Rolfes, but Mr. Rolfes did not hear him or did not understand him, and went on selling some unrefrigerated tripe to a fair-haired woman who, like himself, seemed to be of German extraction. Dr. Pomeroy remembered that there were many Germans in Trimble.

He went back to Main Street, where a small, weather-beaten, green streetcar marked College was clanging furiously at a stalled Chevrolet driven by a woman who seemed almost in tears. Progress was coming everywhere. Some day the woman would not be subject to nervous tension, because she would understand all her psychological problems, and the motorman would keep a volume of Jefferson handy for unavoidable emergencies.

The walk to the newspaper office was not long. One letter in its sign was missing, making it read *Trimble Times*, and sound like an editorial. There was no noise of presses, and later he discovered that they stopped running early in the afternoon. Following arrows, he climbed to a dingy second floor, where a tired woman at a typewriter seemed to be piecing a society column out of handwritten letters that she had difficulty in deciphering. Through an open door, however, he saw the large, good-looking, dark-haired, Irish-faced man who had been introduced to him as the editor.

The editor recognised him at once, before he had time to ask a question of the tired-looking woman.

"Dr. Pomeroy! Come in, sir!" said the editor agreeably. "This is my lucky day. V.I.P.s every hour."

Dr. Pomeroy shook hands with him warmly, happy to have found a friend and noticing with pleasure that he had the suggestion of a Southern accent. This, together with the traditional liberalism of newspapermen, was definitely encouraging. "I just called, sir, to pay my respects and get a little information."

"About what, sir? Sit down!"

"About John Peyton Trimble, sir," said Dr. Pomeroy, settling himself in a chair. "About——"

The editor leapt out of his. "Don't sit down! Get up!"

"I beg your pardon," said Dr. Pomeroy, wondering if it were a joke.

"Get up! Get up!"

Dr. Pomeroy began to be offended. "Of course if I have intruded, sir——" He rose to his feet.

"I can't go through all that again. Not without a drink. Come on! Work's done anyway. Afternoon paper, do all our work in the morning."

"I'd be delighted, sir, if you'd join me in some refreshments," Dr. Pomeroy offered stiffly.

"No!"

"No?"

"No! My idea! You're my guest." The editor seized a water-soaked, sweat-stained hat with a hole in its crown, and led the way through the door. "I don't want anyone treating me any more! Good-night, Mattie Lou. Don't leave out the Mother of God bingo this time. They're sore."

In general, after a good beginning, he made a dubious impression on Dr. Pomeroy, who wondered if he would get anything at all out of him. Any real, solid information.

Above all, Dr. Pomeroy remembered, he must not get drawn into any discussion of politics. He was in a nest of Red-baiters, of whom the most prominent was the son of the former Ambassador. They would attach much too

much importance to the Hiss case and believe that every employee of the Department was a potential Russian spy. This was a place where the red herring had worked. Even a newspaperman was not to be trusted. These people would never realise how minor the infiltration of Communists into our government had been and how effectively it had been checked by the Truman Administration. They wanted a witch hunt, and so he must guard his language carefully. He was a visitor in Salem.

8

DURING their walk back to Dr. Pomeroy's hotel, which had the best bar in town, Danny Greenup wondered why he was volunteering information to another visitor who would almost certainly misuse it. His Democratic companion pleased him no more than Rudenko had, the Communist turned Republican. Also, this Washingtonian was every bit as unattractive as the New Yorker had been in the morning. He looked like a Protestant minister of the evangelist type who thought that the Phi Beta Kappa key on his watch-chain marked him out as an enlightened intellect. Such a man would never understand Jack Trimble. In the first place, he would not understand a point that Jack had made privately but emphatically, that it had become practically impossible for a conscientious American official to serve his country abroad because of the humiliating and ignorant interference that he received from members of the Senate.

Jack had the Protestant virtue that Danny admired and envied most, boldness of thought. Danny's Protestant father had had some of it. Jack, however, had the courage to act upon his perceptions. When he had found his technical work abroad seriously impeded by vote-seeking legislators he had simply resigned, quietly so as not to embarrass his government, but none the less decisively. But Dr. Pomeroy was not that kind. He stayed on in the government and complained discreetly. Danny had read a pamphlet

he had written, which had been sent free by a foundation to every newspaper in the country. It was the kind of liberal gripe that was making everyone sick of liberalism and preparing the way for a Republican sweep. Danny had not run any mention of it in his paper, though as everybody knew, including his boss, he was at heart a Democrat and liked to sneak in that sort of thing.

While Dr. Pomeroy was making some dreary Brain Trust point about the meat-wagon he had seen down a side street a little while before, Danny resolved not to tell him any more about Jack than he could help. He would never understand Jack's three marriages, for example: why it had been natural for him to marry the society girl at first, Alix Vanderbilt; why he had also had to get away from her and their child; why he had married Barbara Allen, the Communist fellow-traveller, and why he had also had to get away from her; why he had wanted to go to the Soviet Union; why he had wanted to get out of it; why he had gone into the desert in New Mexico; why he had let everybody think he was dead; why he had come back and served in the war; why he had served in the post-war; and finally why he had married Augusta and come back to Trimble with her. It was too interesting a life. It would all be way over Pomeroy's head. Much better to kid him along.

He walked like a draft horse. Not like Rudenko, who always kept lunging against you and shoving you towards the gutter, but like a draft horse: straight ahead, with square-toed shoes and steel-rimmed blinker-spectacles. How dumb of the State Department to send a man like that to Jack, who could be a sucker for charm but never for a plodder.

"Tell me about the Trimble family," the fact-finder was saying.

"Well, I see them as a kind of a hollyhock that got pretty high up in the world and then, of course, wilted. That's why Jack and his brothers had to start all over again." Danny despised himself as he spoke; it was too accurate. And not a bad image. But then his best images came in talk; not when he tried to go back to poetry.



"Brothers? Are there more than one?"

"There was one more. Spence. The oldest. Died last year. That's what's eating Brent." He hadn't wanted to say anything of this; it was too factual; but for some reason his fantasy had deserted him and he was feeding the fact-finder too well. Reportorial habit had taken over, and he had to go on, though disgusted with his own conscientiousness, "Brent's got an idea that Jack was responsible in some way for Spence's death, because he made him nervous. Now he thinks Jack might do the same thing to him. He's afraid of Jack's mind. That's why he's crazy to get him out of here. After the publicity in Iran he wanted him back. Now he can't wait until he gets him out."

Dr. Pomeroy looked shocked. "Oh come, you don't really believe that."

"Naturally, I was only blowing bubbles." Now Danny was annoyed by the fact-finder's repudiation of the best insight he had been able to come up with, which had been too realistic for an uplifter's view of human nature. Henceforth, Danny knew, he would have no trouble with his conscience.

They entered the hotel bar, which was called the Canterbury Room but was decorated in nautical style, because an error had been made by the Cleveland firm which had shipped its anchor-shaped lamps and ship's-wheel chandeliers and rope-tied ash-trays to Trimble, Ohio, instead of to Trimble, Indiana, where Lake Michigan fish was now being served under brownish pictures of the Frankeleyn, Maunciple, Prioress, Wyf of Bathe, and other Pilgrims. Danny explained the error for the second time that day, but got less response from Dr. Pomeroy than from Rudenko, who had laughed and added it to the astonishingly voluminous notes he had taken. Dr. Pomeroy merely wondered if there had had to be a financial settlement.

A chubby-cheeked farm-girl, round as a silo and named Charlotte, came to take their orders. Danny knew that she needed her tips to support her husband, who had been a pilot during the war and ever since refused to work, but

the sight of her always made him unhappy, because it recalled the good old days in New York, when Dena had supported him while he wrote poetry for the little magazines and tried to earn his keep by giving her ideas for the fashion copy that she wrote for *Mademoiselle*. Now he was doing the supporting, because his dad's job had been offered him, and he had foolishly taken it, and more foolishly done well at it, and he disliked any reminder of his fall. If only Street & Smith had accepted his proposal for A Home for *Mademoiselle* Husbands where a man could go and rest quietly if he succeeded in keeping his wife on the job for ten years. He wouldn't have to be nice to his boss, he wouldn't have to shave every morning, he wouldn't have to drink with a fact-finder who took his whisky as if it were medicine and quickly said, "Now, Mr. Greenup, tell me all about the Trimble family."

"Well! What's the lead? Can't just repeat what I told the other guy. Let me see. 'The Trimble saga begins properly with a case of gonorrhea.' Of course the fellow who told me about it didn't use the word, but I think it's the right one, medically speaking. Now that I'm a newspaperman I use the right word every time. As a result I have my own car, my own house, and my children grow up far from the roar of the El in a clean town where no more soft coal is burnt than is absolutely necessary. Meanwhile my wife, relieved from the onerous duties once imposed upon her by the odious Street & Smith, now has an opportunity to recline all day on a chaise—what is it, chaise-longue or chaise lounge?"

"I always say couch. But I thought you were going to tell me about the Trimbles."

"Oh yes, oh yes."

"You didn't have to tell me about Mr. Trimble's diseases, however. I just want to learn more about his family backg——"

"Oh, he didn't have the disease! That was his great-grandfather, the preacher. He got it in Massachusetts, over a hundred years ago. One of the Boston Irish girls gave it to

him. Maybe it was *my* great-grandmother. Anyway, this holy man was paid for his sinning, and it changed his life. It's all written up in his journal, in the college library. It made him want a pulpit, and when he got a pulpit he decided to go West. Massachusetts was too crowded with pulpits, I guess. So he came out here. First he went to Cincinnati and married the richest girl there. Then he moved here and started Trimble. He was smart. But they've all been smart. And when Jack's father got a little too gay and lost all the money——"

"Ah, yes, third generation—— Shirt-sleeves to shirt-sleeves——"

"Well, maybe that was why, but I thought it was because he liked the girls. The family curse. Anyway, when Jack's father lost all the money, why, Jack and his two brothers, they just made it back again. They're *smart*."

"Tell me more about the brothers."

"Ever read the fairy-tale about 'The Water of Life'?"

"Fairy-tale?"

"I was reading it to my daughter the other—— It's about three brothers."

"As I recall, there are several fairy-tales about three brothers——"

"They're all sent out by their father to get something. But the two older ones make the same mistake, insult some dwarf or some witch, and only the youngest knows what to do. He has the answer. He is kind to the witch, and he always knows what to do. That's Jack. And that's why the others hate him so. That's why Spence died—sheer envy. That's why Brent can't stand to have him around any more." Danny knew he was being indiscreet, but couldn't check himself. He also wished he wasn't giving away so much free information, but had to go on, "Even when Jack was making his biggest mistakes he was always moving ahead. The other two just dug in. They made a lot of money, but they never went ahead. Oh, Brent's a lot smarter than Spence was. Spence was a straight Bob Taft man. The Old Guard. They take life too hard. Holy war. Grass-roots.

All that. They all die early. No compromise. Brent's smarter. He gets along with the other side, too. Your side. You know, he never once asked me to write a 'crusade' editorial. There was a time when he had a real admiration for Jack. He still has. But now he's afraid of Jack's secret. He thinks Jack has too damn much fun. I guess he looks back on his own life and wonders what the hell he was doing with it when Jack was having all that fun. It makes him think." Danny lit a cigarette and continued:

"And then there's Jack's son, Hank. He can't stand his dad. And he's always working on Brent to get him out of here. Even though——"

"I've heard about the son. Why is it that he is so much against his father?"

At last and quite suddenly Danny felt that he had got hold of himself, and didn't have to give away so much to this guy whom he didn't care for. "Oh, that's a long story," he said evasively, and called to the waitress. "Charlotte! Charlotte! What about another?"

9

WHILE Charlotte was saying "The same thing?" Danny saw two familiar faces but did not realise that they had come into the bar together. One of them was Rosemary Bauer's, the other was Rudenko's.

He nudged Charlotte and pointed to Rosemary, "Aw aw! But where did she get the dress? The last time I saw her she was emerging from her father's mansion clad only in a dressing-gown and clinging to her publicity. Is she working here again?"

"Working?" said Charlotte with all the acids of respectability. "She's *staying*."

And then Danny understood, especially after he saw Rudenko take her arm and guide her, as if she were a princess, towards a booth rimmed with a cotton hawser and trimmed with a painted compass. "So he met her after all. He must have gone back from the college and

picked her up. Where'd she get the dress, Charlotte?"

"Out of her bag of course," the waitress said with the profound knowledge of detail taken for granted by old inhabitants of Trimble.

"I'm sorry, Dr. Pomeroy," Danny apologised, "but this is hot news. I thought she lost everything, Charlotte."

"No, they saved everything, except the house."

"I didn't know the Bauers could afford to come here."

"They didn't. Only her."

"Oho."

"Oh, it's perfectly all right. They both have different rooms. Both on the second floor. But if you was to ask me——"

Dr. Pomeroy looked at the ceiling. He was noticeably impatient in the presence of so much news-gathering, and Danny intervened, "Better get our drinks, Charlotte. Dr. Pomeroy wants to tell me all about the Reds. He's a world-famous expert on what the Reds are going to do next."

Dr. Pomeroy smiled pleasantly when the waitress had gone and said, "Actually, I know very little of any plans that the——"

"Personally, I don't think the Reds have a chance, even if they get a new man at the top. And God knows they need one. Obviously there's got to be a big change sooner or later, but I don't think it will make the slightest difference. They'll have to reorganise from top to bott——"

"Do you really think Stalin is making big mistakes? How did you arrive——"

"Ever since the late '30s they've been on the skids."

"You think the Trials undermined their position? I've always said that myself. Certainly there's no need for a witch hunt here. The so-called Red menace is a thing of the past."

"Ever since they let McKechnie go they haven't been the same team. Or even before that. When they let MacPhail go. Say what you like about him, he knew how to build a team!"

"McKechnie? MacWho?" Dr. Pomeroy paused irritably.

"Blackwell! Wyrostek! You can't build a ball team around two men. One pitcher. One hitter."

"Are you talking about baseball?" Dr. Pomeroy asked querulously, with the ring of a college president denouncing over-emphasis on sports. "I thought we came here to talk about the Trimble. I merely wanted a little background information on the fam——"

"Oh yes. Love to talk about them. Just had you mixed up with another guy. He likes the Cincinnati Reds. I've been off of them for years. They lose too much. Now Ohio State—that's another thing. They win. All they have to do is lick Wisconsin, Illinois, and Michigan, and they go to the Bowl. You see, they've got this very clever kid who——"

Dr. Pomeroy looked seriously offended, and pushed his chair back. "Thank you very much, Mr. Greenup," he said coldly, standing up. "It's been kind of you to give me so much——"

"Sit down, Doctor, sit down. You people from out of town just get my goat, that's all. You rush in here and want your story right off, just like your hot dog. You sound like you come from the South. Well, if you do you've been away a *long* time. I don't get *my* stories that way. I have to get acquainted with folks, pass the time of day with them, ask them about their kids, their operations, their tax bills, listen to their troubles, before I even think of coming to the point. I could tell you a lot about the Trimble, but I'm not going to. I could have told a lot to that guy over there"—he indicated Rudenko with his thumb—"when he came pumping me this morning, but I didn't. You guys have been away a long time from the way folk really live. I'll bet you read that way too. Hurry! Hurry! Hurr——"

Dr. Pomeroy sat down. "I apologise, Mr. Greenup. Tell your story any way you want to tell it."

He was such a hopeless case that Danny didn't want to tell him anything, even then, when he was more lifelike than he had been any other time, but it was impossible not to take pity on him. The contemptible frailty that was also making Danny a good editor, a good father, a good husband

would now have turned him into the most sickening thing of all, a good fellow, if he had not looked up when the ship's clock struck three bells and seen that it was five-thirty. He would have to move fast if he were to go home and get Dena, come back to the hotel and pick up Rudenko (whom he had stupidly promised a ride) and then get to Jack's at six, the early hour when guests were asked to arrive because some of them had to go to a radio broadcast later. He explained his predicament to Dr. Pomeroy, who instantly asked him to take him along too, because he was going to the same party.

They threw down their drinks, and he magnanimously let Dr. Pomeroy pay for them while he went over to Rudenko's net-draped booth and greeted Rosemary, who looked surprisingly honest when she had her clothes on.

"Hello, Rosemary."

"Hi, Mr Greenup." At any rate she had learned enough to be respectful to the Press. When she was on her way to the City she had not even given him a tumble.

"Good evening, Mr. Rudenko. Are you ready to go?"

"Go where?" Rudenko asked suspiciously.

"The Trimble's."

"Is it this early?"

"Afraid so."

"We've just started our drinks."

"I tell you what. I have to go home and get my wife. I'll stop by here on my way back and pick you up."

"All right." Rudenko made it sound as if *he* were doing the favour.

His impudence put Danny in a good mood. From now on he would not be accessible to any feelings of traveller's aid empathy for any out-of-towners. They could act as if the Kallikaks of this measly burg were no more alive than the auto oil that stained its streets, had no more emotions than the distilled water that went into its batteries, had never had an original thought, had never read a book, and they would not get the slightest rise out of Daniel Prendergast Greenup. On the whole it pleased him to be treated like linotype

fodder. Then he was under no obligation to treat them as if they were alive either. It made it easier.

When they went back East, when the week-end was over and they wrote their stories or filed their reports, they wouldn't know anything about the Trimbles anyway. No new experiences would stand a chance of climbing past their hard-won prejudices into their well-educated minds. Why not move to one side, then, and enjoy the beauty of their perfection?

10

THE daughter of the richest man in town, who had refused even to look at the new houseboat he had named after her, Sue Trimble was making sure that her cousin Hank, when he reached for a cigarette, would upset a valuable Chinese *sang-de-bœuf* vase. By moving the silver cigarette-box a few inches she manœuvred it into a position where the chances were that if he reached back as usual without looking he would open the lid of the box against the vase, knock the vase off the table, and deeply offend her father. She had studied his movements with the spider-like care and the dancer's understanding that she had given to everybody's muscular activities in her father's large, dreary, hushed, decoratorish house ever since her illness had brought her back home from Paris in the spring. The vase betrayed an old-fashioned taste of which she disapproved, but it *was* the most beautiful thing in the house, and one of the few things there, aside from some children's books by Hans Andersen and Beatrix Potter, that she loved. Her father also loved it, and that was why it had to be sacrificed. No other loss would have been so sure to cross the frozen tundra of his feelings, to reach his almost unreachable anger. The deep red of the vase might have been taken from his own interior dyeworks. His clear-headed business detachment permitted him few abiding ties to material things, few of the passionate idolatries that she had found so touching in France, but the vase was one of them, and almost as dear as the first car he



had ever owned, a brass-trimmed, rubber-horned 1910 Ford which still stood behind the house in the garage. The vase had been acquired in 1919—a wedding present from Henry Ford himself. One more reason why it had to be smashed.

Sue was dressed and eager to go to the party at her Uncle Jack's. She always wanted to get away from her father's depressing house, supposedly the most enviable in town but actually a museum of painful memories, and enjoy the dazzling modern radiance that Augusta had created from even gloomier beginnings. She was wearing a black woollen suit, bought in Paris, that accentuated the slimness of her waist and was long enough in its full, padded skirt to cover almost all of her over-heavy dancer's legs.

Since it would be some minutes before her father and mother came downstairs, she had put into an enormous blond gramophone, which was also a television and radio set and supposed to go with the pale decoration scheme imported at great cost from Chicago, a Russian recording of Prokofiev's *Lieutenant Kije* suite, movie music that might also have been written for a ballet. Its playful dissonances would be certain to annoy her parents and her cousin, and it was a good idea that they should be in a pet when they arrived at Uncle Jack's. Then their provincialism would be less confident, less formidable. Subtly led to fear that the world was being taken over by dark foreign powers, ravaged by strange new artists, replotted by sinister ministers, they would glumly be foiled in the stratagems against her uncle of which she had warned Augusta by telephone.

The record had been given him in Tehran by a Soviet diplomat, "when the Cold War was just getting chilly", as Uncle Jack put it, and later turned over to her, with many other foreign trophies, upon his return to Trimble. The gift had been made at a time when a pro-Communist *coup d'état* in Iran was anticipated, and when he was one of its principal opponents. Most likely the gift would not have been made a week later, when it began to be apparent that at last American diplomacy had taken the initiative and there would be no Communist *coup d'état*. At the time of

the gift, however, the Soviet Ambassador was in a mood to be generous, because in reality he was contemptuous. In those days Sue had been proud of her uncle and rejoiced again in a surname that had been spoiled for her by the sign "Trimble Batteries" on every third public garage or filling-station. In those days she had hero-worshipped him.

She had never, however, been able to accept his explanation of his return to Trimble. He was covering up, she believed, a serious mistake.

"I can't wait to get well," she had said the last time she had dined with them, when Augusta had served snails, which were her favourite dish. "I'll never come back. Never."

"Yes, you should get out," he had said.

"Why don't you two come with me? I'll take a house big enough for all of us. Anywhere you like. You know those things better than I do. Mallorca, Italy, Spain, Morocco, Fr—anywhere you like." She hadn't wanted to say outright that of course she would pay their expenses; they might be offended.

"You don't understand," he said. "We've had all that. You need it. We don't. Believe it or not, we like it here."

"But what do you get here that you wouldn't get better there?" It was a warm evening; the trees whispered mysteriously; with a glass of good Burgundy in her hand—she had brought it herself—she could imagine them all under a Mediterranean sky. One of their many foreign friends had come to dinner, an attractive young man, more interesting than any she had ever known, and was staring at her with an appreciation of all the charm that she would have when the right man came along.

"I'm a violent man," Uncle Jack said. "Half strong acid, half strong alkali. Half my crazy mother, half my crazy father. And now for the first time I'm able to live with myself. I'm a chemical solution. I'm at peace."

"I don't believe a word of it. If it hadn't been for those senators, you'd still be abroad. You're just pretending to like a *faute de mieux*. You'll never be happy outside the Big World."

"Was he ever really *violent*?" Augusta asked. "He tells me so, but I don't believe him."

"Oh yes!" Sue said proudly. "He scared me. He looked at me as if I weren't there. You ought to hear Daddy on the subject. He thinks Uncle Jack was nuts, still is in fact. 'He hasn't got any perspective,' he says, 'never did. He told Mama he was going to support us all. Your Uncle Spence and I were paying the bills of course. Then it was geology. Nothing but geology. Later it was geophysics. Nothing but geophysics. Then he married, and it was all marriage. Then he met a girl, and it was all love. Then he went to Russia, and it was all Russia. Then he came back, and it was all anti-Russia. Then he went to the South-West, and it was all the South-West. Then he went to war, and—— Now it's all international co-operation. Meanwhile he broke Mama's heart—she died while he was in Russia. And he broke up two marriages, and ducked out of paying for them——' Well, he did say that."

"I know," Uncle Jack said. "He's said it to me too."

"And now he's come back here, and this is just one more of his experiments, as he calls them, though I could think of a better word. And he's surprised that Hank, his only child, whom he refused to see for years, is a little fed up with it all.' Oh, he was really violent! I don't think anything ever impressed Daddy so much. Especially all those girls in between."

"I just can't believe it," Augusta said, tugging at his ear. "Such a quiet man."

"You see," he said, "I told you so. I was a real heller. And now I'm so good that it hurts people. They say men have a menopause too."

"Jack!" Augusta protested. She disliked that kind of talk. For an artist she could be remarkably conventional.

It had been a painful conversation for Sue, who disliked realising that her favourite relative, who had once been so glamorous, had now become so pathetic. Also, it was a disagreeable reminder that youth had to go, and that hers might be taken from her without the intense satisfactions

he had known. She felt like dancing, to take her mind off her grim forebodings that her life, because she had slipped up somewhere, was not going to be a full one.

She improvised a few steps to go with the Prokofiev music, or rather adapted a few that had been invented for her when she had danced a minor part in *Petrushka*. It was a good sign that she enjoyed the music. A month or so earlier it would still have depressed her by reminding her of her failure as a dancer in the New York ballet company, her flight to Paris, and all the other things that had gone wrong for her. Now, however, the worst of her breakdown was behind her, and she no longer even missed New York or Paris or any other place. Soon she would be going back to them, but in an entirely different frame of mind. Talking to Augusta had done wonders for her, more than she had ever got from any analyst, though of course the things said by the analysts kept coming back and making more sense than they had at first, like quiet time-bombs that went off in her head, especially in the morning when she was waking up. Soon she would feel ready to leave Trimble again, and this time she would never return except for family funerals. But when she went back to New York and Paris it would be a lot harder to get money out of her. She didn't know what she wanted, even yet, but she knew what she didn't want. That was something.

• In some ways she was grateful for the odious election campaign and for the odious cousin who had plunged her and every other member of her family into it. It gave her a purpose: to protect Augusta, to protect Uncle Jack. Sometimes she felt like their mother. They had to be protected from the *really* clever ones, who were clever because they were dull. Her parents and Hank, since they never tried anything really hard, like an art or a science, had lots of excess energy and all of it went into looking after number one. Sooner or later, of course, they would pull the famous John Peyton Trimble off his pedestal; he didn't have a chance against them; every moment of his star-of-the-family life infuriated them and of course he did have a lot to answer

for; but it wasn't going to happen while she was around. She was just enough like them to be able to beat them at their own game. And she would fight to the death for Augusta and Augusta's baby.

"Don't move, honey!" a persuasive voice behind her commanded. "You're beautiful! I just don't see how we ever got you away from New York. Or Paris, for that matter."

It was Hank, of course, playing poor boy and everybody's lover in the Hollywood style that he had acquired from living with his mother in California and in an unpadded dark-grey flannel single-breasted suit which made him look conservative and dependable and at the same time boyish and slightly narrow-shouldered and helpless: just the effect he desired during the campaign. Also none too opulent. It was essential that the curse of Trimble money be removed from him in the minds of the voters. No Roman patrician had ever run for *tribunus plebis* in a more carefully cut toga. The *Times* regularly printed pictures of Hank in the backyard of his rented house in a poor part of Trimble, near the gasworks, in his shirt-sleeves splitting logs like another Lincoln, or in the kitchen helping his wife, who was a farmer's daughter, carefully picked from the right district and having her second baby so that she couldn't go far from home. (A nice girl, too, but so bewildered by it all that she had nothing to say.) •

Sue stopped dancing and also stopped the music. Much as it would annoy her father, she couldn't go on with it. Hank took the heart out of her. "Hello," she said without feeling and sank into an over-stuffed chair. Phoniness could go so far that it simply overpowered its enemies: you didn't know where to begin in fighting it.

"I can't remember when I've seen anything so—well, just plain lovely," Hank continued. Every day of the campaign made his speech more twangy. It was beginning to be difficult to believe that he had been born in the Doctors' Hospital in New York, brought up on Park Avenue, and educated at Choate and Princeton. His mother's maiden

name was Vanderbilt, but he was now drawling like a farmer's son. And the summers that he had spent with his mother in Southern California were now making themselves felt in his basic, elaborate, gasp-making showmanship.

"They'll be down soon," she said prosaically and tonelessly. Her hope of fighting him successfully had simply turned tail and run. Also, a new fear attacked her as he sat in his favourite over-stuffed chair: perhaps, despite his well-known parsimony, partly natural, partly tactical, he was carrying his own cigarettes this time and would not reach for one in the silver box behind him. It was such a simple way to avoid her trap, and she had completely overlooked it.

He kept to the text of bright, interested, adoring cousins that he had written for both of them. "I hear we're going to have some distinguished visitors this evening at Dad's," he said gaily. As usual he had been well briefed. No doubt he had made his wife, whom he wasn't taking to the party, call up and get an advance list of guests. Or somebody else. He insisted on being briefed. He hated surprises. "The kind of people you like."

"Really?"

"Yes! There'll be a magazine writer from New York. I admit I never heard of him. Eugene Rudenko. And then there'll be——"

"Eugene Rudenko! Why, he was the editor of *The Scythian Review*!" This was an unexpected echo from the highbrow world that she respected even when she did not understand it. She had subscribed to the *Scythian* and sometimes dipped into it.

"And then there'll be a man from Washington. Dr. Pomeroy. He's very big in the so-called Point Four programme. But you won't guess who the other one is!"

"Who is it?" she asked tonelessly, already regretting her momentary interest in Rudenko.

Hank enjoyed his opportunity for suspense. "The wanderer has returned. The return of the native. Well, almost a native. A real celebrity. Guess who!"

"Who?"

"Cairo Thornton."

"No!" She couldn't help it; she *was* interested. Much more than Rudenko, this really was her world. All her dancing friends liked Cairo Thornton's plays and there was lots of talk of making a ballet of one of them, or a scene from one of them, some day. He was a poet who had come like good luck to the theatre.

She felt better. A fresh breeze was blowing from the right direction. It was as if someone had thrown open a window and let in the east wind.

"Yes! He's here, and he's visiting Dad. I wonder why he looked up Dad as soon as he got to town?"

"Why didn't Augusta tell me? I was talking to her on the phone."

"Maybe she was saving it for you as a surprise. She knows how much that sort of thing means to you." For a moment she believed that he was genuinely interested in her happiness, he said it so feelingly, but then she saw that it was just one more instance of the professional solicitude at which he had grown so expert during his two years in the State Legislature. She had nearly been taken in by it, she realised, as she heard voices in the hall and knew that her parents were approaching.

At exactly that moment his hand reached back on the table, towards the silver box, to get a cigarette. She needn't have worried; he *hadn't* brought his own. And he looked in the direction of the voices, rather than at the silver box. She was in luck. It couldn't have worked out better.

II

WHEN Hank greeted Sue he was dog-tired and a bit worried, but it would never do to give her or anyone else that impression. He had made two speeches and done a lot of handshaking that day, and when he got back to Trimble in the evening there wasn't even enough time for him to go home and see his wife and child. Politics demanded continual sacrifices. He had to be content to put on a clean shirt

and to wash his face in a dirty wash-room of the dirty grey-stone court-house, which always smelt of whatever unsavoury dish the prisoners were eating in the county jail next door. This evening it must have been some kind of stew with lots of onions in it. His stomach was easily upset, and for a moment he had thought he was going to be sick. He had closed his eyes and held a handkerchief to his nose.

His hard work would never be appreciated by Sue or almost anyone else, so strong was the popular superstition that politics were nothing but a chance to loaf. And Sue, with her disdain for everything connected with her home town—how she loved to bring out that cuss word ‘provincial’!—was a very sick girl who had to be handled with kid gloves, at least while the campaign was on. She had failed at everything she had tried to do, and she was just about his age—in her late twenties—yet she scoffed at others who had really accomplished something. It was the helpless rage of the incurably undisciplined. She would never do anything and she would always gripe at those who did. But for the moment she had to be humoured.

Hank realised clearly that he had one major problem: the over-confidence of everyone connected with his campaign. Everyone believed that his election was a shoo-in, because the Republicans had been sending their man to Washington from that district every two years for over a century, even during the F.D.R. insanity. Everyone believed that the only reason why the district was now represented by a Democrat was because Uncle Brent had decided to *give* two years of power to the opposition, so as to shake off a power-crazy old Republican who had been in Congress so long that at last he had dared to challenge Uncle Brent’s authority. So the old man’s last campaign had been scuttled, and his Democratic opponent—a harmless biology teacher who collected butterflies—had been allowed to win. Now the former Congressman was on the shelf, no longer a threat to the organisation, and Hank had been nominated in his place. Hank had been building himself up in the Legislature, where he was respected as a sound thinker and where he had also



received state-wide publicity as an implacable enemy of Reds in the schools and colleges. The whole thing had been one more of Uncle Brent's adroit manœuvres, one more instance of his incredible patience and timing, which had also permitted him to rid the organisation of a few crooks who had burrowed into it, despite his precautions, during the long tenure of the former M.C. And now the coming election would go as usual to a Republican, and Hank was that Republican, and as sure of moving to Washington in January, and as many other Januarys as he wanted, as if he were already there.

That was what everyone believed, everyone but himself. He knew how easily he could lose, *because* everyone felt like that.

The man he had just been talking to was typical of this kind of ruinous over-confidence—Pete Traub, the Sheriff, who was handling the campaign in Trimble County. Pete had learned absolutely nothing from the upset of Dewey by Truman in '48. Only two years later he was showing the same kind of over-confidence that Dewey had shown. He refused to see that the 'harmless schoolteacher' was not harmless at all. The Democrats had a lot of union support and also a lot of appeal to housewives, even the wives of farmers, who thought the Truman Administration was working to keep prices down. It was going to be a hard job to beat the present incumbent, and Hank would need every vote he could get. When he thought of the possibility of losing a campaign that was supposed to be a cinch, he had to go to the bathroom and get some bicarbonate of soda. The backs of his legs sweated. It was even worse than the war. He felt all alone.

Hank had begun very gently with Pete. "Look, Pete, I know you've got a lot on your mind——"

"I sure have! The jail is right next to my window, and today some prisoner picked an onion out of his stew and threw it right on my desk. It landed on my montly report. We had to do the whole thing all over again. Is it my fault they don't feed——?"

"I know, I know." Hank went along with him. Older men were touchy anyway about receiving orders from a young fellow, and in Hank's case there was the additional complication of being disliked because some of the campaign workers believed, ridiculously, that he had had the nomination handed him on a silver platter, merely because he was his uncle's nephew—as if he hadn't earned it with his war record and his Legislature record. Some really big men in Columbus and Washington thought he was politically a natural, and that if anything his wealthy connections were a handicap to him. But envy grew everywhere, the greenest weed of all, and the only way to handle it was to ignore it. ". . . So in spite of everything we've still got an election on our hands, and it's beginning to look——"

"Oh, you'll win, you'll win."

"Do you know the betting odds are against me in Columbus? We've got a hard fight to fight. Now tonight. The new Legion Hall. Both Harold Withers and I will be on the same platform. First time in the campaign. He'll speak first and then I follow. I arranged that myself. I also arranged that the doors open at six-thirty."

"I thought it was seven." Pete seemed to want to go home to his dinner. He had actually had his hat on at five o'clock, and was ready to go, just because Hank was a few minutes late.

"No, six-thirty. The Withers gang thinks it's seven, but our fellows can go in early. I want you to make sure our fellows get there at six-thirty. They can fill the hall if they try. The sound of the applause will come over the air. But I sent word to you about this this morning!"

"First I heard of it."

"Then you'll *have* to get busy now, Pete. I'm sorry, but this is important." It was the time to get just a little tough with him.

"What about my dinner?"

"Eat afterwards. But see that those guys get there at six-thirty."

Pete looked glum, and complained a lot more, but in the

end he promised. Then he drove Hank to his uncle's. Obviously he hoped to be invited in. And it was only during the drive—just like him! *he* hadn't had to worry about an election for years—that he mentioned, and quite casually, some information that might be very important.

"One of the home town boys came back today, they say. That playwright—what's his name?"

"Do you mean Cairo Thornton?" Hank had already been told about this, during the ride back from his second speech of the day, by a young lawyer who had briefed him on the evening and was much more on the ball than Pete.

"That's the guy. Well, he's staying at the hotel, and the house dick there says he's—you know, one of them fruiterers."

"So I hear." It interested Hank that the Sheriff was quick to tell him, with a colloquialism, that the visitor was homosexual. The young lawyer had also revealed this information at once. Sexual abnormality interested people. It had become news through senatorial attacks on State Department personnel, as well as certain murders, and it never failed to awaken fascination and horror. At college and in the Navy it had been a sure way to get a laugh; you only had to imitate a pansy to be funny; but now it had become a serious part of politics. His publicity as a member of the Legislature had been increased, and favourably, when he had widened his drive against Reds in the schools and colleges to include homosexuals. More than a hundred parents had written him letters of commendation. He had hit oil.

"Well, here we are!" Pete Traub looked admiringly at his Uncle Brent's house, which had been built in 1900 by Grandfather Trimble, lost to the bank, and then repurchased by Uncle Brent in the '20s. It was the most sumptuous house in town, and Pete obviously hoped to be asked in, if only for a moment. But there was no time for that now. And anyway Pete would not be invited until he did better in the campaign.

"Remember, Pete. Six-thirty!"

"Sure. Sure thing. This sure is some beautiful house."

But Pete was sent away unsatisfied, from the wide sweep of the veranda and the brown Tudor panels and the white Tudor plaster, to do a better job than he had been doing, while Hank touched off some chimes at the front door, was admitted by a manservant in a black suit whom he greeted cheerily, "Good evening, Francis! How are you?" And the good manners that he could exchange with the butler removed him pleasantly and at once from the disagreeableness of having to deal with the Sheriff. He had returned to the kind of life where he felt at home.

As he walked into the living-room he saw Sue's back while she danced to some idiotic music that came from the gramophone. She was always a problem, but he knew how to handle her. Just ignore all the nasty remarks she threw in his direction, and treat her as if she were the most wonderful thing in the world. That way he had her licked. He'd go on doing it as long as the campaign lasted.

"Don't move, honey!" he said. "You're beautiful!"

## 12

BRENT TRIMBLE had no grey in his sandy hair, and from above looked younger than his fifty-two-year-old brother Jack, whose darker hair had been softened with white, but he was fifty-eight and seen face to face he seemed sixty-five, while Jack seemed no more than forty-five. Brent felt tired, and wished he could stay home and go to bed without dinner. Also he felt unwell. He had felt unwell for months. The supposedly intelligent Dr. Meek at the Trimble Memorial Hospital said there was nothing wrong with him, it was all a state of mind that could be cured by another trip to Florida (which wasn't likely), but Brent had noticed that a similar state of mind had preceded the heart attack that had suddenly carried off, a year earlier, his older brother Spence.

He hated to admit it, but for some time he had been in what the rather effeminate Episcopal minister, Mr. Blanchard, whose hands were always wet, called quite accurately a state

of despair, and no amount of recent church-going had done it any more good than rest or travel did. This despair had not developed until Jack had come back to Trimble, and it had been growing ever since. It took the form of making Brent wish almost every morning that he did not have to get up and go to work, of making him ask himself repeatedly while he shaved, "What's the use?" or "No! He's all wrong. All wrong about everything!" 'He' referred of course to Jack.

Spence had felt the same way a full year before his death. "He makes it all seem so damn worthless!" he had said more than once of Jack. But Spence, red-faced, heavy-breathing, over-weight, always throwing open windows in the office, even in winter-time, had been too emotional, and complained continually that the world was going to the dogs, taxes getting insupportable, the government interfering too much, labour becoming the true master, profits shrinking to the vanishing point, and the only way to improve things was to have a real depression, much worse than the last one, that would 'put the fear of God into these rummies'. But this didn't square with his equally strong wish to sell more batteries than ever before, and when he died there was at last a look of peace on his face.

Brent felt very strongly about Spence. "He was the genius of the family," he said firmly, to forestall any suggestion that Jack was. "Spence developed our battery, and right up to the end he had all the best ideas we ever had. I was just the moderating influence, he was the genius. He had hunches, and they were nearly always right."

As a matter of fact, Spence had had a hunch against Jack's coming back to Trimble, and Brent had not listened to him. He had been foolishly over-impressed with his kid brother's publicity, and had thought that their mother, if she were alive, would have wanted all three brothers to dwell together again in unity. He had been delighted when Jack had surprised him by accepting his impulsive offer of the acting-presidency of Trimble College and had come home with his new wife, bought a place in Trimble, and settled

down. It was sometimes suggested to Brent that he had eased Jack out of the presidency, but actually Jack had been eager to give it up. "I don't want any more administrative work," he had said plainly. "It's been the curse of my life." It was true that Brent had begun to wish that the job had not been offered him, but even so the transfer from president to professor had been arranged at Jack's own request.

At that time Brent had still been without suspicion that Jack might be the cause of his new unhappiness. Conversations between them had quickly dried up, as they discovered the differences of their interests, and his desire to attend Jack's lectures—which incomprehensibly were liked by many students—had simply ceased to exist during the very first one. But he had not yet thought the problem through. There was too much work at the office.

It was Spence who had opened Brent's eyes to the true effect of Jack upon both the college and the town—Spence and, after him, Hank. They had been quicker, but they had also been more drastic. In time the superiority of his own cooler-headed methods would be appreciated. He only hoped that Hank would acknowledge it later on. Perhaps he would. The boy was smart. He could learn. Slowly he was catching on. He had a lot of talent, and if he had lived in England his career would have been a lot easier to plan. He would already have been a Conservative M.P. Here, because of the prejudice against money and family, it was hard. Fortunately, he was now getting the kind of guidance that his father had never given him.

Brent finished an extra Scotch that Francis had brought him with a grave, solicitous look, and felt ever so slightly better. At the same moment he realised that he might be in for unexpected trouble, as Marge came into his dressing-room, wearing a low-cut white evening gown from which nut-brown, middle-aged flesh poured like an overflowing glass.

"Baba," she asked plaintively, in a tone that always alarmed him, "how do I look?" She had been warned by Sue not to dress up, it was not that kind of party, but she

had done it, and now like a naughty child she wanted confirmation.

"Why, Mother, that looks beautiful," he said quickly, "simply beautiful. You'll be the prettiest girl at the party. Now let's go, or we'll be late." He patted her affectionately on the shoulder, both to forestall further reassurances and to prevent one of the scenes that sometimes startled everyone else, who after all forgot that she had been the daughter of the most powerful banker in Trimble and now was the wife of its most powerful businessman. She could shout when she suspected that she was thought to have done something that was not in entirely good taste. There had been such a scene, during their last trip to New York, in the Biltmore, where Brent always stayed, and he didn't like to imagine another like it. Even the head-waiter, whom he always tipped ten dollars, had looked resentful. Next time he went to New York he was going to try the Waldorf.

"Do you really like it, Baba?"

"Yes, dear. It's wonderful. Simply wonderful." He kissed her cheek, and patted the lower part of her body, which seemed relatively lifeless, and all the more lovable, after the girl in the house in Ybor City which he had visited with Dr. Meek—an experiment that had not worked out at all as Dr. Meek had planned, that had only convinced Brent that such things were not for him.

When he finally persuaded Marge to go downstairs with him he heard Sue's voice, speaking to Hank, and he wished it was as easy to win his daughter's confidence. Instead, everything he did seemed to get her back up. The houseboat had certainly been a fizzle. She might have been an adopted child, and born on an Indian reservation, she was so strange and so hostile. Or—as strangers had pointed out so many times—she might have been Jack's child. In the same way that Hank might have been Brent's; it was a theme so familiar that it no longer interested anyone. From the very first she had shown the same indifference to other people's feelings that Jack had always shown. And the same determination to get what *she* wanted.

Hank of course had a legitimate complaint against *his* father. Sue had none.

There were times when Brent wished he had given her no money at all, that she had not been sent East to a fancy school and to a fancy college, but into the factory. And later, if she deserved it, to Trimble College. She would have been a lot better off.

But of course that had been impossible. At a certain point a man had nothing to say about how to bring up his own and only child. Like Jack, she had had to get the best education obtainable. Their father's bankruptcy had meant that Brent and Spence had had to work for a living, mowing lawns, selling papers, working in a garage, even when they were kids, and by the time Brent was twenty they had started their battery business. They had never gone any farther than high school, and Spence hadn't even gone through that. But Jack and Sue had had to go to college. Jack had won a scholarship, and he had also earned a high salary as soon as he got out, but that didn't make him any less of a snob than Sue. Or, at heart, any less of a stranger in Trimble, who would never fit in, no matter how much he tried.

Actually, his return to his home town was merely the latest cock-eyed thrill-seeking of a person who would never straighten out and fly right. Real progress was due not to colourful 'personalities' who liked to see their names in print, but to the quiet ones who did a good, decent job day in and day out, without publicity. Trimble had made a lot of progress during Jack's absence, it had grown from a small town to a small city. Soon it would be pushing 100,000, but only because there were a few quiet ones who loved the place more than they loved themselves. They were the ones who could face the messiness of things as they really were, not as they were supposed to be, and never complain. Nobody made a fuss about them because they went on doing their jobs in an orderly, reasonable way. They saw the work that had to be done and they just went ahead and did it. They didn't take up square-dancing or pal round with union leaders or get a news story every time



they gave a few books to the library. They were the ones who built the hospitals and the schools and the colleges, kept up the level of business ethics, made the banks steady, fired the cops or the politicians when they got crooked. They had to get mixed up with politics, sooner or later, and so they had to put up with a lot of false accusations. They were called boring because they didn't insist on being clever all the time but saw things as they were. And their reward was that their own flesh and blood preferred any tricky show-off to them. It wasn't right, but it didn't prevent them from going on doing what they had to do, what nobody else had the guts or the patience to do.

Thank God Hank understood the truth of the situation.

Brent had almost reached the lower floor. Merely by the tone of their voices, without hearing what they actually said, he knew that Sue was being unpleasant to Hank again and that Hank as usual was handling her beautifully. When she had first come home, in the spring, desperately ill, after at least two known attempts at suicide, Hank had repeatedly sent her flowers, and good, big, expensive bouquets, and she had barely thanked him for them and as soon as he left the room had said, "Whew! Please, Daddy, never let him in here again!"

She was much better now, of course. Some day all the strange things that were troubling her would pass away, and she would be the sweet little girl that he had bathed himself every Saturday night until she was nine. They would go for walks together again, in the woods behind the house, or go out on the river in the boat that it had meant so much to him to order for her. She had refused to step aboard it, but she was getting better every day, had almost been friendly at breakfast, and some day she would be her old self again.

He was entering the living-room after Marge, and about to say quickly, "Well, folks, how about a little drink before we take off?" which might divert Sue's attention from her mother's long dress, when to his amazement he saw Hank reach back deliberately and brush off the table a red Chinese vase that had been given Marge and him as a wedding present, over thirty years before, by old Henry Ford himself.

It was the one thing in the house that he really loved, and there was a picture in colour of one like it in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, not nearly as good.

And Hank had knocked it off the table!

IT was a Nijinsky moment that could never be taken away from Sue. Her mother gaped liked an idiot. (She was wearing a dress so cute that it would have looked better on a child movie actress.) Her father, wearing a double-breasted suit that looked like a male maternity robe, was stripped of his maddening calm, and Hank put irretrievably in the wrong. A fraction at least of the boredom she had felt since spring was expiated. She glanced at herself in a mirror and was astonished at her own beauty; her cheeks looked less pudgy, less grey, her red-veined eyes less beaten. And blood flowed into her heavy calves and she wanted to dance.

"Hey!" her father shouted at Hank.

"What's the matter?" Hank looked behind him.

But the vase had fallen and broken. Her luck had held. On the thick-piled grey carpet it looked like a cardinal, a Kentucky cardinal, shot out of the sky by a hunter. Now whenever her father's eye rested on its familiar place on the table his heart would be wrung and at the same time hardened against her cousin. The centuries that had spared a minor work of art, through fallen dynasties and fire-swept palaces, had not been wasted. The potter's sacrifice was well timed.

Her desire to dance grew stronger. She put the needle again in a groove of *Lieutenant Kije* and rose on her toes, as if getting ready for an *entrechat*, while Prokofiev's dissonant flutes re-insisted.

Hank jumped to his feet and realised what he had done. "How did it happen?" he asked bewilderedly. For once he was unsmooth. "How did——?"

"You knocked it over," her father said with wonderful

simplicity, and she awaited the denunciation that was all she needed to make her completely blissful. It did not come. Her father caught hold of himself with such speed that she was cruelly disappointed. "Oh, well, it doesn't matter." And he actually made it sound as if it didn't.

"But how?"

"It must have been when you reached back for—— It really doesn't matter. Forget it!"

"This is terrible," said Hank, looking miserable. "I'll get you another."

"It meant so much to Baba," said her mother. "Maybe we can mend it."

"Impossible. But it doesn't matt—— Sue! Stop that music!" The attack that her father should have directed at Hank now came unexpectedly and unjustly at her. He actually roared at her.

"Sorry, Father." She stopped dancing at once, but took her time about turning off the perverse flutes, and then caused them to die with an unpleasant groan from the machine.

"You know how I hate ——! Well, if you want to play it, go ahead." He was already regretting the roar.

"Oh no."

"Go ahead."

"Oh no. Not if you don't like it. I happen to love it, but——"

"*Please* play it!"

"I wouldn't dream of it." She closed the lid of the machine and put on an air of martyrdom that she had found more effective than anything else during the long weeks in bed.

"I'll get another vase," said Hank. "As close to this as it's possible to find. There must——"

"Poor Baba," said Mrs. Trimble, picking up the pieces of the vase, instead of ringing for a servant. "Why! It isn't broken so bad. I could glue them together so you'd never notice it. And Baba's so tired." She made a real sacrifice. "Let's not go to their darned old party."

"Mother! Ring for Francis!" Sue shrieked.

"I feel all right," said her father. "We've got to go."

"Well, I do have to shove off if I'm going to get to the Legion Hall on time. But I can't tell you how much——" Hank began.

"Forget it," said her father. "Now, what about a drink?"

"Thanks, Francis brought me one."

"What about another? I need another!"

"Sure, but I do have to be shoving off soon."

Later, when they had drunk their quick drinks, and were on their way to her uncle's house in the woods west of town, harmony had been so solidly re-established between them that Sue realised once again the futility of trying to sow discord among these nearest enemies of herself, Augusta, Uncle Jack, and all that she held dear. Not only did Hank rebound swiftly and adroitly from the vase incident, he brought up the very proposition that she had hoped to frustrate. Since she had liked the vase herself, she had a horrible realisation that it had been sacrificed in vain.

"Tonight's the night," Hank was saying with the special vindictiveness he always showed toward his father. "I've got to make it impossible for him to go on any longer with this absurd pretence of neutrality. If he isn't for me, he's against me."

"Take it easy," her father counselled.

"The idea of a man's own father not coming out clearly for him!"

"Perhaps nobody listens to him anyway."

"I'm not so sure of that. And with this campaign getting so close——"

"Where'd you hear that?"

"There's a man in Columbus who's giving odds *against* me."

"Oh, you hear that sort of thing in every campaign."

"Well, I don't like it. I'm going to force the issue tonight."

"What do you propose to do?" And she found herself admiring, even while she hated it, the mild way her father asserted his authority.

"Well, first of all, I'll talk to him frankly." She had a distinct impression that Hank was not telling the whole truth, but had some other plan that he wasn't revealing, even to her father. It was his way to keep pressing, always taking more leeway than he had actually been given. He would feel he was slipping if he didn't. Her father had complained of his tricky presumptuousness, though he also seemed to admire it.

"Maybe we'd better wait until this new offer from Washington has been put up to him. Once he accepts that, it won't matter what he does about the election. As a matter of fact, he'll have to keep quiet. Let's handle it that way."

"Well, naturally, anything you say, sir, but——"

"Let's handle it that way."

"I thought that if I just mentioned in my Legion talk that he *is* supporting me, after that he wouldn't be able to do anything else. A father can't come out against his own son."

"No, let's not do anything too *clever*. Let's let it work itself out. That's the best way. Half your problems work themselves out if you just sit back and watch them." It hurt her to have to half-admit that there was wisdom, of a kind that recalled a college lecture on ancient Chinese philosophy, in her father, whose middle-class prudence and crudity outraged all her æsthetic principles. There was also a passive clarity that suggested he might be much more ill than she had realised, much nearer to death.

Hank was saying something evasive when Uncle Jack's house came into view, in a dusk grey still warmed faintly with pink, and her mother burst out, "Baba! She's taken away the rabbits!"—a perennial reference to some white iron rabbits that had grazed the lawn until Augusta had removed them. This was supposed to be an insult to Uncle Jack's grandfather, a Governor of Ohio in the 1880s, who had built the house and laid out its lawns and chosen its beasts.

"She's put back real ones," Sue commented, as a cotton-

tail ran into the woods, frightened by the headlights of their car.

"Aw, that's brown," said her mother.

When they entered the white, almost new house that Augusta had surprisingly extracted from its General Grant predecessor—no one had dreamed that a few touches, usually of a paintbrush or a sanding machine, could possess so much Bakst magic—they saw the guests who had just gone in before them, who were taking off their light-weight coats, while Jack and Augusta helped them. The guests were Harold Withers, with a deaconly head of wavy hair, boyish except that it was white, and his mousy, frowsy, Epworth League wife. Uncle Jack had been playing a little politics on his own, and had invited Hank's opponent, the present Member of Congress, to the same party at which his son was also just arriving. If Hank was laying plans to force his father's hand in the election campaign, Uncle Jack was just as shrewdly announcing that he was not taking sides. Even Sue, whom politics bored, could see that.

Hank sized up the situation with his customary quickness, while her mother looked stunned and her father had the air of being outsmarted in a deal.

"Harold!" Hank exclaimed with his unfailing smoothness, as if nothing could have delighted him more. "How nice to see you! Mrs. Withers! How well you're looking! What a charming dress! Now, now, this is the way politics ought to be conducted. Just like a friendly debate. Oh, I'm so happy to see you. You know my uncle and aunt, of course. And my cousin. Mr. and Mrs. Trimble. Miss Trimble. Mr. and Mrs. Withers."

All of them knew each other of course, though they hadn't seen much of each other for a long time. They shook hands nervously, trying to seem delighted. The moment had the poised elegance of a church social.

Hank shook his father's hand with particular warmth. "Oh, I have to thank you for this, Dad! This was a real surprise!" And he made it sound as if he liked his dad and

as if he also liked the surprise. As usual, he was not going to be fazed by anything.

WHEN Rudenko arrived at the home of John Peyton Trimble he realised at once that he had walked into a trap. Enemy faces were staring at him, faces already beginning to laugh. First he was peered at expectantly by the editor cretin who had driven him there, and then the pretty blonde whom he had seen at the college did the same thing. He wanted to strike out wildly with a savage bellow. And when he crossed the treacherous threshold they couldn't conceal their triumph any longer, but burst into open laughter.

Then he got it.

A man came forward to greet him, holding out a hand and wearing a friendly smile. "I'm John Trimble," he said. "I think we've met before."

It was the same good-looking, extraordinarily intelligent man whom Rudenko had met at the college, only now he was wearing a fashionable tweed jacket and well-pressed grey flannel trousers.

Rudenko got it, but he couldn't keep himself from saying, "I thought you were Professor Arbuthnot."

"That was Danny's little joke," said his host, while the editor cretin slipped quickly away down a gleaming, candelabraed hall, into another room, and the blonde girl also vanished with a broad and satisfied smile.

"But you said——!" Rudenko protested.

"I didn't say it. He did." Nevertheless the ex-Ambassador obviously enjoyed the situation, and Rudenko thought it would be a simple matter to dislike him. As they talked, however, he made the surprising discovery that he liked this man as much as he had liked the man he had met at the college. He had clear, precise ideas, but he was in no hurry to express them. He almost preferred to be silent. Meanwhile his experience spoke for him.

Rudenko knew he was in for a rough evening: he liked

the brother he was going to attack; he disliked the brother he was going to cajole; and he had better get used to the trick that would have to be played on his emotions. It was part of the accursed job he had taken when he had found himself with less than a hundred dollars in his bank account.

If only he hadn't been born with his weakness for literature, for charm! By this time he would have made enough money to be able to indulge his intellectual interests in whatever way he pleased. Or if Doris hadn't walked out on him! But now he had an odious task to perform, and his natural friend would have to be betrayed and his natural enemy would have to be wooed. The editor in New York wanted John Peyton Trimble torn down, as a symbol of 'neurotic liberalism', and Brent Trimble built up, as a symbol of 'the new, enlightened conservatism'. And the editor in New York was boss. And the boss of the editor in New York was a publisher whose sister might be made an ambassadress if the new, enlightened conservatism came into power by just such well-planned Press manoeuvres.

In the early days of the *Scythian*, when it had been subsidised by the Communist Party, he had had to do similarly repugnant jobs. Battenberg, the Party's cultural chief, had blown him to a cup of coffee in a cafeteria and told him that his two chief hates were to be: (1) the bohemianism of Rimbaud, Cummings, Hemingway; (2) the elegance of Proust, Joyce, Henry James, Eliot. And so he had dutifully written against them, and as soon as he had broken with the C.P. he had praised them.

And now he was starting all over again. Working for the Republicans instead of the Communists. His new masters despised intellectuals even more than his old masters had, but there was no point in complaining. That would be to confer upon modern life a dignity it simply did not possess, it simply could not possess, because then his portion of guilt would be more than even he, who had made his Faustian pact long ago, could bear. He would have been as wretched as the captives in Babylon, ages ago, hanging their harps on the willows.



"When are we going to have a chance to talk?" he asked John Peyton Trimble, while they walked slowly down a hall on which were hung, in glass-covered, simple frames of pine, or chromium, or wormy chestnut, some small paintings in styles he recognised.

"Any time you say."

"We can't talk tonight."

"Why don't you telephone me tomorrow?"

Rudenko realised again that he was not dealing with an uncataloguable absurdity like the editor, but with an experienced man of affairs who might have a very shrewd idea of what he had been commissioned to do and might suavely avoid an interview. Trimble was one of the few American businessmen who had been able to get the hang of modern international politics. And now he had graduated from practice to theory, and obviously had some ideas of his own.

Rudenko paused to plan a new attack. Meanwhile he could not help but be impressed by his surroundings. He knew that it was a large Victorian summer-house, built by Trimble's grandfather, the Governor in the 1880s, when he had flattered the voters of Ohio by not going away to Maine during the hot months, as in the past, but stayed among them. The house had passed out of the family's possession for some years, and had decayed until John Peyton Trimble had re-acquired it upon his return to his home town. And then it had been restored by Mrs. Trimble, whose building talents had become renowned when as Lady Jerrold she had re-done a house in Chelsea that had been praised highly in the first-rate *Architectural Review* and later in *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar*. So much was known in New York, but Rudenko had not been prepared for an impression of lightness and spaciousness, originating chiefly in mosque-white walls and ivory floors, that was anything but Victorian, that actually made him feel happy and suggested that wood and plaster and stones were capable of more power than he had ever formerly been willing to concede them. Could one's senses really be so important? In literature, yes, but surely nowhere else. Yet glimpses of Mrs. Trimble's paint-

ings, together with small Klees, Picassos, Matisse, Mirós, all originals, of course, reminded him of a modern consciousness that, once it was protected from the mob by money, lots of money, meant more to him than anything else. He was happy, at a time when he did not wish to be.

And the woman who had cast this spell over him was no less interesting than her husband. It was impossible as yet to see much of her, while she received her guests, yet he already knew that she had the tall, slender, blonde Anglo-Saxon elegance that attracted him most deeply, that he had only approximated in Doris. With Mrs. Trimble—or Augusta Sterrett, as she signed her pictures—he would have been satisfied both carnally and æsthetically. Doris had always been a little too coarse—she was large-pored and fat; loneliness at Wellesley had made her eat too much; the literary life had made her drink too much. Her money and her willingness to spend it on the *Scythian*, just when he broke with the Communist Party, together with her slavish devotion, her ability to listen to him for eight, nine, ten hours at a time, had permitted him to overlook a lot. In Augusta Sterrett there was not only cleanness of line, as well as an attractive fullness in the right places, there was an aristocratic complication of feature that already made him wish he hadn't spent any time with Rosemary Bauer, the former drum-majorette, who for all he knew might go out and give her over-heavy haunches and hammy upper arms and fish face to some other man *on his liquor*. And even if she stayed in the hotel and waited for him he didn't want to waste so much time on conversation as she obviously was going to require. She had even said something that suggested that, innocently of course, she had been the victim of Stalinist propaganda, and nothing could cool him off faster than that.

A terrible fear re-assailed him: he had been wasting his energies! It was only among the rich and the well-born, among people like the Trimbles, that any real opportunity offered. All his socialist background had been a monstrous

self-deception. The drum-majorette might work in handily as nightcap and sedative, but he must make certain that she did not take a minute or a penny more than was strictly necessary. Unfortunately, spoilt by her laughable clippings, she lacked the docility of a good whore. Our whole prostitute class, in fact, was getting ideas above its station. Since his nerves needed the massage of inferior women now and then, they should serve him with the modesty appropriate to their function. After all, his function was much higher; he was an intellectual, one of the few who really counted. It was time that America had clear lines between the classes. Only when society's unfortunates knew their place would they have any chance to be happy. Happiness for the many meant service of their masters.

By the time he had come to the end of the series of small paintings that hung on the walls of the white hallway, meanwhile asking a few questions about them, Rudenko was ready with a new plan of attack. He would flatter John Peyton Trimble by getting him to talk about himself, by putting him into an expansive mood. But this was a wary diplomat, not to be taken in easily, and so it would be smarter to ask him about his ideas than about his deeds.

"Tell me, Ambassador," Rudenko said in the same tone of voice in which he had been asking a question about a lithograph by Miró, "what do you call this new science that is going to do the same thing for politics that psychosomatics did for medicine? Psychopolitics?"

"Excuse me, I see some guests arr——"

"I hope it's not like metapolitics."

"So do I. Excuse me, I really must greet them. Won't you go into the studio and get a drink?" He indicated a very large room, three storeys high, with white walls and a cerulean blue ceiling, where some other guests had already congregated.

"But I thought we were going to talk about politics."

"Why talk about them?" said Trimble. "Do you see that man coming in the door? That's the Democratic candidate for Congress. And if I'm not mistaken I see my son coming

up the path. He's the Republican candidate. Why talk about politics when the real thing is here?" And now he left, while Rudenko again, to his own surprise, could not be antagonised by him. Sooner or later they would have their chat, and Trimble would put his foot in it somewhere, and there would be a chance to write an attack. Meanwhile Rudenko was going to get a good stiff drink and enjoy every minute of it. The present expertness of John Peyton Trimble would only make his future mistakes more delightful. Everyone slipped up somewhere, and the man who finally dominated an interview was the man who wrote it.

15

FOR some time now the dream of Augusta had been tenderness. She wanted to get far away from the hard, chilly, garden-party, *vernissage* politics—politics even when nominally art—that she had lived in England. And when she had met a man, and a compatriot whose province was not far from her own, with the same dream, she had married him. Together they wanted to be purged of the hardness they had been born into, or had wandered into, or formerly chosen.

She was happier now when she exercised her new-found faculty of seeing everyone, no matter who, tenderly. There had been too much criticism all about her, too much close weighing, too much haggling over prestiges. Now she was willing to run the opposite risk of sentimentality.

And so she found something to love even in two literary guests who had invited themselves to her party and whom she would not ordinarily have cared for—Eugene Rudenko with his paranoid scowl and Cairo Thornton with his cattiness. It was true that Mr. Rudenko certainly deserved the first syllable of his name, she had observed as soon as she heard it, but on the other hand he was genuinely brilliant, and most of his grumpiness would probably be traceable to early wounds of prejudice. Also his good mind might prove stimulating to Jack, who sometimes wanted better conversa-

tion than he ordinarily found in Ohio. She knew that Jack had decided not to give an interview to him, but he would almost surely enjoy sparring with him.

She had met more than one of Mr. Rudenko's type in the capitals of the world—writers with little interest in anything but writing. There were also painters and sculptors and composers of similar narrowness, but she had found herself steadily less impressed by the work of specialists who put all their energy into one art. It was the surest way to success—and subsequent sterility. She herself had followed it too long, and if it hadn't been for her hunger for maternity she might still be following it.

A man with that kind of narrowness would never understand Jack, who had built his career on an exactly opposite strategy, or apparent lack of strategy. Jack had wanted something more tangible than success, and so although he had had more than his share of it, he remained sceptical of it.

"That's the most impressive thing about you," she had said to him soon after they had met. "How did you learn it?"

"The hard way. Mother wanted me to have a big success, and I was dumb enough to try for it. That was when I married Alix. All part of being a brilliant young executive with a wonderful apartment in Gramercy Park, a wonderful house in Glen Cove, and all the rest."

"Your mother wanted it for you?"

"She took our come-down pretty hard. I guess that's why we *had* to make good. And I was closer to her than the others. And then there was religion. Mother became a Buddhist."

"Did she really? You've said that before, but——"

"Certainly did. And when I was a kid. I had mysticism crammed down my throat when I was six years old. Well, anyway, it made me learn how to fight. You'd be surprised how many kid fights start about religion. I was more of an outsider in my home town than any Jew or Catholic. Even my pal Danny belonged here more than I did, and Catholics were especially tabu. This was a Klan town in those days.

Almost no anti-Semitism, because there were only two or three Jews, but the large number of German Catholics meant a lot of anti-Catholicism. But that was nothing compared to the anti-Buddhism."

Remembering similar darkness from her own childhood in Kentucky, the underside of a democracy that cannot be officially admitted, she understood him better. She was well aware of the family problem that had turned her in upon herself, that had made her a painter in fact, but she had not realised that he too had suffered from the early sense of social estrangement that she had found invariably in each of her artist friends. "But I'd think that if your mother had the courage to choose—you know—an unpopular religion, she wouldn't have put any pressure on you to make a big success."

"Ah, she was a non-conformist in one thing, but all the more conformist in everything else. When Father lost his money she wanted it back and damn soon. Of course he was bright enough to die only two weeks after he went bankrupt—got himself shot by a coloured man: quite a story—but that only made her madder. He'd ducked out again. Actually not much time passed before we were doing fairly well again. And this time she had three stalwart sons looking after her, and competing to see who could do most. I was furious with Brent and Spence because they did more than I did. I was going to have a much more brilliant career, I had to. Sometimes I wonder if I'd ever have married poor Alix if it hadn't been for that. No, if I'm disillusioned about success, it's because I have a lot of reason to be. Every time I chased it, it bit me."

"Did you go to a Buddhist church? What do they call it, a temple?"

"No. We didn't have any. She just read things to me on Sunday. In the parlour, in a rosewood chair. I hated every word. If it hadn't been for that I'd have *belonged*. Anyway I thought I would. Later I realised why she had been attracted to Buddhism, which I admire very much now, but at the time I could have done without it. Of course I

developed a very stubborn loyalty to it when I was a kid. But that had nothing to do with *it*.

"Do you belong to any religion now?" she had asked.

"No."

"Are you an atheist?"

"No."

"You believe in God, then?"

"Yes."

"But you're not doing anything about it?"

"No."

The next day, however, he had said, "You asked me if I were doing anything about my belief in God, and I said No."

"Yes?"

"I *think* I am doing something about it."

"What?"

"I'm not sure."

"That wouldn't satisfy Father Bartell, I'm afraid."

"No. But even if I were sure, I wouldn't say."

"Do you believe in hiding your light under a bushel?"

"I believe in making sure I have a light. I believe in living so it will grow. If it's real it will shine, whatever I say about it. And the less said about it, the better."

For the first time in a long time she had been impressed. Because *he* was impressive. He had lived his way into his words, and would say nothing that was not real to him. He must have had an actual experience of God to have said as much as he had. She was looking at a man she could respect. And he was not a blacksmith or a factory hand or an aborigine, but a business man and a bureaucrat, the most contemptible of modern types, and apparently on his way to becoming still worse, an intellectual. Her clever friends would punch holes immediately into his statement, but to her it remained, like him, impressive.

Mr. Rudenko would quickly punch holes into anything Jack said to him. But Mr. Rudenko had been handled roughly by life and was merely returning the compliment. Robbed of any chance of magnanimity, he thought it

impossible in others. The only way to help him was to give him the silent love he didn't believe in.

When she saw Jack leave him to greet Harold Withers and Hank she decided, even though it was time for her to rush back into the kitchen to have a look at her *paella*, to station herself at Jack's side. This preliminary encounter with his redoubtable son was important, and she must remind Jack silently, by her presence, or by hints if necessary, of the firm, clear policy that they had decided on together in all dealings with Hank. Jack might forget it in that first strategic moment, and be led into some error that would pursue him later. He tended to imagine that he was still as clever at politics as he had once been, before an increasing habit of scholarly withdrawal had overtaken him. He tended to imagine that he could hold his own with Hank. This was a gross self-delusion, she had already told him, and he needed her to protect him from some remembered image of himself which he still treasured from more active and less scrupulous days.

He was in a good mood, a hearty mood, which was all the more reason why he might make a mistake. He had enjoyed helping in the preparations for the party—and of course he always helped expertly—and he had charmed Cairo Thornton, who had said he had always wanted to go to New Orleans, by making a complicated New Orleans cocktail called a Sazerac. For Dolores and Gaby, who both adored him, he made another complicated New Orleans cocktail that tasted faintly of pineapple and had the texture of cotton candy. He enjoyed bartending as much as he enjoyed cooking, and as a result he might be over-exuberant and vulnerable.

Unfortunately, it was not immediately possible to reach his side. Augusta was intercepted by Cairo Thornton, and it required considerable moral effort to regard him tenderly as he needlessly detained her. As a matter of fact, he had been becoming for the last hour or so steadily harder to love. At first he had been all praise for her house, her clothes, her husband, but as the afternoon turned into



evening he seemed to regret lavishing so much interest on a way of life that differed obviously, and perhaps critically, from his own bohemian habits.

"You mustn't get suburban," he was telling her as she tried to make her way to Jack's side and also to greet her newest guests. "You mustn't ever get suburban. It's all very well to pluck yourself up out of the art world and come out to live next door to the country club without actually joining the country club, but don't think you'll really get away with it. I *know* these people. They'll want you to be like themselves, and if——"

"Excuse me," she said, "I have to say something to my husband."

"Leave him alone!" Cairo Thornton ordered shrilly. "Can't you see he wants to be left alone? You women would be much smarter if you stopped chasing after your husbands. Don't you know they resent that?"

The polar blast that she had mastered in England returned in an instant, and her new tenderness lost all its green. "No, I don't," she said coldly, as if she were bickering again with some effeminate, fat-hipped gallery director on the opening day of a new exhibition.

"Well, they do. The real stimulation they get is from other men. Ask any psychologist. That's why they go to bars or football games or plays as soon as their mere reproductive duties are over. You'll never hold them that way, if they have any real appetite for life. What you should do is just resign yourself to the fact that women have very little to offer a man once——"

She walked away while he was still talking. War had been declared, and in spite of her new hunger for peace and good will, she had fired an answering gun.

She greeted Harold Withers and, a little later, Hank with exactly the same degree of welcome. Jack and she had decided long before that they would give no evidence of side-taking in this campaign. She slipped her arm through Jack's as soon as she had greeted these and the other new arrivals, and was pleased to notice that he was following

their agreed-upon strategy as impeccably as she herself. It was nice to be reminded tangibly of his diplomatic training, which she always kept forgetting.

Thus reassured, she felt better able to cope with the difficult problems that entered her house with the remarkably hostile members of her husband's family; with Brent, Marge, and above all Hank. She had married into much more trouble than she had counted on, but if she and Jack stood firm, it could all be handled. She was particularly glad that she no longer had to fear that Jack would give in to Hank because he still felt guilty toward him. That mistake was no longer possible, in view of the many manifestations of Hank's hostility to him. Unfortunately, his clarity had not come until he had given Hank much too much money, as a kind of moral blackmail to which Hank was not at all entitled, but which he had demanded as necessary to completing his law studies and financing his campaign for the Legislature. It was money that Jack could ill afford to give, money that would have been much better spent on rebuilding the house, the lack of which now meant interest payments that they had to scrape hard to meet. There were no imported sausages and no clams in the *paella* tonight because there had been a large amortisation to pay on the first of the month. And such failures of hospitality hurt her more, because of her mistaken need to play the great lady, than the mere lack of a cook. She still liked to talk of the parties she had given in London. Very stupid, but incurable. To entertain beautifully meant much to her. Too much. It came from the same egotistic passion which made her desire to build beautifully and paint beautifully. Whatever she did must be of the best. Father Bartell, the Oxford Jesuit, had made it clear to her that she was committing the deadly sin of pride.

"You look tired!" she exclaimed to Hank.

"Well, I *have* been at it all day," he admitted.

"Now, Jack, you must make one of your very best Sazeracs for Hank. Poor boy, he's exhausted!"

That was the right tone, exactly: *seeming* to give him extra

attention, while not departing in the slightest from a line of strict neutrality. And it was rather nice, too, to feel tenderness, even toward *him*, and yet know perfectly that she still had her wits about her. This was one time when he was not going to put anything over on his father.

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AS usual, Hank studied his father's face with particular care, though with a mere glance, and as usual he found there the healthy-tanned enjoyment of life, the serene-eyed freedom from worry, the indifference to morality that he particularly detested. Once again he was reminded of the many injuries done him and his mother by a man obviously deficient in all natural sentiments.

It was a subject, of course, that he could discuss with no one. Even his Uncle Brent, whom he suspected of feeling pretty much as he did, rejected all overtures to talk about it. His Aunt Marge was only too willing, but her mixture of spitefulness and balminess tied his tongue. Politically, it would be most unwise ever to be classified as a father-hater. Domestic resentments were tabu; every good, honest, hard-working American family was for ever free from them. So he had to keep a stiff upper lip, and well buttoned, about the terrible moment in the oak-panelled library at Choate when he had read a novel by the awful woman, Barbara Allen—what a desecration of the ballad! a known fellow-traveller!—who had taken his father away from his mother and then married him. There had been scenes in the novel which he was sure must have something to do with both his mother and his father. Above all, a gloating seduction which made him realise again how disgusting sex was. He could not remember the book now; it had mercifully slipped out of his mind; all he could remember now was the white infirmary, smelling of iodine, where he had been sent soon afterwards, with pneumonia, and running down the corridor, crying like a child. It had been hard enough living that down.

His father was the kind of heel who thought he could do anything he wanted and get away with it. Why not? Hadn't he actually done just that all his life? If his biography were ever to be written—which was unlikely, because a great reversal of opinion on the New Dealers, even those nominally Republican, was long overdue—it should be called *Crime Without Punishment*.

At heart, of course, Hank loved his father and had done everything possible to give him a break, to try to understand his strange behaviour. The sad fact remained: he had received almost every advantage, and he had not been faithful to his trust.

Once he had tried to tell Hank why he had left Hank's mother. "She is—well, strange," he said, but Hank had quickly made it plain that he wanted to hear no more. He was not interested in listening to excuses—which, incidentally, had his mother sounding like a sick little girl, with a morbid fear of the body—for the major shock of his life. His father had cruelly left his mother and married another woman. He would never get over it, over the shock it had caused him. There could be no explanation and no forgiveness.

The other woman had been his mother's best friend. They had gone to the same school. She had spent many week-ends at his mother's home in Glen Cove. Barbara Allen came from a very good family. Her father was a federal judge, but she always had had radical ideas. Husband-stealing had come naturally to her.

As usual John Peyton Trimble had not had to pay for his infidelity. On the contrary, it had paid him. His new wife's radicalism led him to read certain books and to suspect certain trends in the financial community. He sold almost all of his securities, which had increased enormously in value because the stock market was going up, some months before the famous crash of '29. His kind of unscrupulousness drew a profit even from the desertion of his wife and family. And his luck held. Just about that time he met a French geophysicist who had developed new methods for

discovering oil beneath the earth's surface and was trying to sell them to American oil companies, but without any success. And John Peyton Trimble resigned from his own company, joined forces with the Frenchman, and went with him to the Soviet Union, which paid him large sums to help develop its oilfields near Baku. His new wife could not go with him, but it was she who had got this new project going. And so John Peyton Trimble was sending money to the bank when his old friends in New York were losing everything in the crash and jumping out of hotel windows.

But his prosperity had its price, paid by others. With the same heartlessness that he had shown in deserting his wife and child he had overruled his mother's pleas against the trip to Russia. She claimed to have some prophetic vision which warned against it, but he refused to take her advice, went to Russia, and a few weeks later she died of a heart attack, and he, of course, did not even attend her funeral. It was characteristic of him to do exactly what he wanted and to find somebody else to pay the bill.

In Russia he also prospered. He got large fees from the Soviet Government, as well as the experience of first-hand dealing with Russians, and a smattering of their language, literature, and history that later helped to qualify him for his military and diplomatic assignments. Even more important, he and the French geophysicist became suspicious of Soviet police methods when some of their Russian colleagues disappeared mysteriously, and so he adroitly slipped out of the Soviet Union some time before the Moscow Trials took place, avoided a kidnapping attempt by the Gay Pao in Turkey, and came home to his second wife, whom he had seen very little of. She had published a novel, and belonged to any number of Communist Front organisations. She refused to believe what he told her he had seen in the Soviet Union. She had made a trip to Moscow herself and believed that the tourist's paradise she had seen was the real thing. So they split over politics, and although she was a radical she didn't mind taking a healthy slice of his dough.

He could afford to pay it because his old oil company,

having been hit hard by the depression, now eagerly bought the geophysical methods that he and the Frenchman had been unable to sell them during the boom. So Hank's father was in clover again financially, and he had also cleared himself politically, because he had never been a Communist or a fellow-traveller (Hank had had him thoroughly investigated) and was one of the first to bring tangible evidence to this country of what life was really like under the commissars, or the 'commitsars', as he called them.

But then he did the strangest—and perhaps the most diabolical—thing of his career. He disappeared. It happened late in 1937, or early in 1938. He had been in New Mexico, visiting friends, and one morning he couldn't be found. By 1939 both of his former wives were convinced that he really had died, although there was no body, and both of them re-married in the same year—Hank's mother an avocado rancher in California, Barbara Allen a novelist much more famous than herself. And not many months afterwards, in 1940, John Peyton Trimble was found in New Mexico, recovering from what was said to have been a nervous breakdown accompanied by loss of memory. The New York papers were full of it. His picture appeared on the front page of the *Tribune* and not far from it in the *Times*.

Hank's own theory, of course, was that it was all very convenient. His father had simply got tired of paying about forty thousand a year in alimony to two women who no longer meant anything to him. Hank himself no longer meant anything to him, and when he had visited Hank in New York or at school in Connecticut, they had felt like strangers together. Hank's mother had thoroughly warned him against his father.

Also, his father was by this time no longer interested in the oil business. He had managed to save some money, in spite of all his expenses (when his memory conveniently returned, he promptly paid the back alimony owing to his two wives, *up to* the day of their new marriages) and now he proposed to live a very simple life in New Mexico. Hank,

whose expenses at Princeton he paid, had visited him at this time, during the summer of 1940, when Hank was about to become a junior, and had realised clearly, for the first time, that they would always be enemies. His father was now in his early forties, the prime of life, yet he wanted to retire from the world and do nothing but read. He cooked his own meals, drank no liquor, refused cigarettes. Most of his reading was in philosophy. "I'm just beginning to live," he told Hank, but Hank came away—and some weeks sooner than he had expected—with the idea that he was really beginning to die. He had never been so depressed in his whole life. His father had cleverly succeeded in sloughing off all his legal responsibilities, and now he just wanted to dream away the rest of his days.

But the U.S.A. entered the war not long afterwards, and his father was too smart to get caught in the draft or even get stuck with a boring job. His experience with the Russians and in the Middle East was valuable, and before long he was in the Persian Gulf Command. As usual he enjoyed every moment of it and was well rewarded. When the war was over he had been made a general. Then came his well-known diplomatic experiences, his meeting with the arty Lady Jerrold, his ruthlessness in breaking up her marriage, and his absurd plan to return to Trimble. Hank had had premonitions from the start that it wouldn't work out, but his Uncle Brent liked the idea, and Hank had thought that his father's prestige wouldn't hurt him either as a political candidate or as a young lawyer who had hung out his shingle on Main Street above a beauty parlour. Actually, his father had been a thorn in their sides ever since, and they wouldn't be happy until he was sent away on another diplomatic assignment. Even Uncle Brent knew that now. Uncle Spence had been right all along.

So his father was being—as usual!—begged to take a job that a lot of other men would give their eye teeth for. The war had dragged him out of his New Mexico retirement, and now the Cold War was going to squeeze him out of Trimble. Merely because he talked such highfalutin

nonsense about ideas, everybody was getting down on bended knee and pleading with him to go out and do something to justify his existence.

*But at last he had been caught.* Fortunately the old lone wolf had finally been trapped. His third marriage had broken his charm. He was known to have borrowed quite a bit of money to finish his house, and what with his other expenses and his loss of salary, he was at last wide open. Some of the paper he had signed could be called. As a last resort, therefore, Uncle Brent—who was well aware of his financial plight—could force him to take the Point Four job, should he balk at it, and insure his departure from Trimble.

Therefore it was all very funny: like watching a black-robed, starch-white nun go through the coy motions of refusal in a dirty movie which, of course, always ended with her flat on her back and just loving it. Or like the protests of prisoners in concentration camps who started out by insisting they knew nothing—*before* the torture. A few of them held out, the story-books insisted, but their existence was doubtful, and even if they really did hold out, they were merely a handful of crackpots who proved the rule. The rule was the only thing that could be counted on in an otherwise unforeseeable and unlovable world. Never bet against the house. Don't be a sucker. Be the house.

His father was one of the crackpots who had successfully bet against the house all his life—*until now*. Now he was going to get it. But good!

It was fun therefore to listen to him while he fought shy of Dr. Pomeroy, who with a clumsiness typical of a Fair Dealer went after him almost as soon as they met, "I've always been a great admirer of yours, Ambassador. It means a great deal to me, sir, I can assure you, that I've been entrusted with this opportunity to come out here and speak to you about a situation in which I know you will be interested." Even Harold Withers, who peddled life insurance when he wasn't teaching school or running for office, frowned slightly at such graceless salesman-ship.



"A situation? What kind of situation?" Hank's father asked.

"A situation in the Middle East," Dr. Pomeroy said pompously.

"I'm more interested in the Middle West."

"Ah, but this is work, sir, that you are better qualified to do than most other Americans, work that——"

"I can't believe that."

"Oh yes, sir! And work that is urgently required by the United States Government as part of its global defence. This is work that you will feel morally obligated to do."

"If I have any moral obligations, they're to myself, not the United States."

"Oh, but seriously——"

"I'm being very serious."

"You can't mean th——"

"I'm seriously interested in myself lately."

"Oh well, of course! Psychology. Physician, heal thyself. William James. Naturally. Those who want to make the world healthier had better start with themselves. Naturally. And very commendable too. But seriously——"

Hank failed to hear the rest of it, because at that moment Dolores, looking more attractive than ever, came into the studio bearing two long wicker baskets in which lay hot garlic bread. She carried them to a long Italian table, carved with baroque grape clusters, where a buffet supper was being put out for the guests. He could not hear anything more that was said, though he merely glanced at her from time to time, and then when no one saw him. It wouldn't be possible to make a date for that night, but he could lay the foundations for a later one. He certainly was glad he had not brought the wife along. Later on, when it would seem more casual, he would find a way to exchange a word with Dolores. He hadn't seen her for a week, and then with a lot of college students around.

Just then the big New York magazine writer—to whom he would have to be nice, though he looked Jewish—and

the little playwright—who would bear watching; he looked tight—went up to his father and began to talk to him. Hank stopped staring at Dolores and listened.

“You won’t talk to me,” said the magazine writer, “but Thornton here has a question that you may be willing to answer.”

“What’s that?” asked Hank’s father, turning to the little playwright and giving him a friendly smile. It was part of the ‘sympathy for underdogs’ that had won him so much publicity in Asia, and nothing disgusted his son more. It was a New Dealish pretension that the little playwright was as good as anyone else, which was bunk because he would never fit into decent society until he had been sent to a psychiatric clinic and cured of the disease that made him abnormal.

“Why do men go to football games?” asked the playwright.

“I don’t know. To see football?”

“No. To see other men.”

“I don’t get it,” said Hank’s father, but then the professor in him rallied. “Oh! You mean that we’re all inherently bisexual. Well, there’s some truth in that theory, but I’ve always thought it was a bit overworked.” And a boring psychological discussion began, of a kind to which Hank’s father was addicted. He had been psycho-analysed after he came back from Russia, while he was breaking away from Barbara Allen, and as a result he could never see things simply or cleanly. His mind had become profoundly un-American.

Hank didn’t mind the discussion, however. It gave him an idea. Why hadn’t he seen it before? His father, in his own way, was just as abnormal as the playwright. Even to be willing to discuss such ideas sympathetically meant that something must be seriously wrong with you.

“Of course there’s homosexuality in all of us, to begin with,” his father was saying. “Every reliable scientific observer has reported that. But most of them also think that it’s part of an immaturity that should be——”

"And I say it's part of our poetic instinct, and we deny it at our peril!" The little playwright certainly was vehement.

"Well, for some people that seems to be true, but for others it isn't." His father went on talking this kind of 'liberal', 'tolerant' drivel—which would mean the end of what little civilisation we had left, if anyone took it seriously—while Hank made an important decision. If there was so little difference between his father and the playwright, it might be necessary for him to expose the connection between them, so that the people could see plainly the danger of 'tolerance' and 'liberalism' of his father's kind. But this would have to be done with political savvy.

Perhaps the playwright had written something that could be shown to the people, while his father's lenience toward it was established. Perhaps one of his plays. Or better yet, something *unpublished* and therefore more publicisable. The playwright was staying at the American House. Pete Traub knew the house dick there. Perhaps the house dick could take a look at the playwright's papers, to see if there was anything among them that could be used politically. It was a wild idea, and no doubt nothing would come of it, and yet it had possibilities. He would talk to Pete about it at the Legion meeting, and get the ball started while the playwright was out of his room.

In an election campaign, while there was still time to act, the important thing was to leave no stone unturned. .

JACK was always upset when he saw Hank. The boy magnetised his most spontaneous interest, but he had learned that paternal longings must be checked. The boy would never forgive him; he had made a very good thing, both financially and psychologically, out of unforgiveness, which had secured him not only considerable sums of money not long after he was twenty-one but a still vaster fund of unearned righteous indignation. The latter was unmistakably linked to his strange political talents, which because he

never doubted himself morally, but felt on the contrary the persecuted victim of a hideous 'liberal' conspiracy, had attained a demonic intensity that made his schoolteacher opponent—who said 'lepidoptera' when he should have said 'butterfly'—seem very tame and ineffectual indeed. A grim irony! Jack Trimble had come home from his travels convinced that political time-lag was such that power inevitably went not to those who might prove worthy of it but to those who merely wanted it badly enough, that for a long time the rational would lose out everywhere to the demonic, and his thesis was being demonstrated on his own doorstep. He could have done without the vindication. He would rather be wrong.

All attempts to get close to Hank had failed. Gifts had only strengthened his sense of moral superiority, and were made to seem like bribes. Many times Jack had thought the best thing that could happen to him was a thorough, well-thought-out beating, but it was too late for that. And Hank was so convinced of the ethical perfection of his rigidity, so attached to the illness that he was passing off as a virtue, that it did no good to praise experimentation as especially necessary to modern health, as essential to the courage to be oneself, or to show that experimentation was as useful in one's personal life as in a laboratory or on an oilfield or a battlefield. The boy was hiding behind an abstract, untested idea of morality in which he was abetted by the popular culture all around him. It did no good to show him that psychological rigidity was as self-destructive as scientific rigidity or business rigidity or political rigidity, that all of them meant merely some biological deficiency or lack of imagination or fear of life or weakness of mettle. And it would be out of the question to tell him that what his father regretted was, not leaving his poor, sweet, post-Victorian, flesh-hating, father-worshipping mother, but staying with her as long as he did.

The boy had been permanently scarred by her. She had passed on her hatred of life to him. He had no idea how sick he was: that the three timid college girls whom he had talked

about eagerly in New Mexico, whom he had possessed violently, stealthily, and always by the same method—slipping into their bedrooms during house-parties, very late, when they would be ashamed to make an outcry—had really been the victims of his mother's training. And he would never believe that it had also been responsible, partly at least, for the murder that he had confessed more guardedly of the antagonistic, threatening seaman whom, as a newly-commissioned ensign, he had tossed overboard from a cruiser during a storm at sea, when the loss could not be attributed to him.

As the boy's illness had unfolded, Jack had been so appalled by it that he had tried to help. He had suggested psychiatry, only to meet with heated counter-suggestions that he himself must be mad even to be interested in psychiatry, even to praise its usefulness. There had also been adroit legal footwork which made it appear that the revelations about the college girls and the seaman had never actually taken place, but had been imagined by his father's own sick mind. The boy had automatic skills of this nature that won all his arguments for him and gave him a tremendous advantage in handling a political audience.

And so, as Jack had known for some time, there was nothing to be done about Hank but be sad, to take one's full responsibility for his illness, and at the same time not to be crushed by so much sorrow and so much guilt. This was hard because Jack, as he knew perfectly well, *had* behaved irresponsibly toward the boy and *did* have much to answer for. Hank was a daily reminder of the worst mistake of his life and the darkest side of his own nature. If his desertion of Hank had been the 'selfish neurotic liberalism' it was called, then he was justly punished for misbehaviour that might be typical of his kind of liberal.

Meanwhile it was necessary to be vigilant whenever Hank came round, and especially vigilant whenever he came round with Brent. And tonight they were both there. He must be on guard against the dangerous 'unworldliness', or occupational detachment, that Augusta said had been making

him too much of an easy mark to the rest of his family, ever since he got deeply interested in his book. He did not go along with her picture of the two of them as 'children of light'—the equivalent of 'the happy few' or 'the non-conformists'—surrounded by menacing 'children of this world', from whom they could learn much but of whom they would have to be wary, but there was just enough truth in the ancient phrases, especially when his son and brother were around, to make him wish to be cautious.

"What are you drinking?" he asked Brent, though he knew the answer.

"Scotch, if you have it."

It pleased him to be able to produce, from behind some other bottles, a particularly good brand of Scotch that he insisted upon having in reserve for just such occasions, despite the pleas of Augusta for economy. Since becoming pregnant she had stopped drinking alcohol and deplored the high cost of the kind of liquor he had once served regularly to his guests.

He made another Sazerac for Cairo Thornton, who attempted to renew the discussion of homosexuality. Jack, however, found less pleasure in talking to him than he had expected. He was the kind of professional writer who saved as much energy as possible for his desk, who seemed to regret any dialogue wrested free from him, who wanted to ask questions and then find fault with the answers. Also he was the kind of homosexual who resented heterosexuals, demanding tolerance and giving none in return—a spoiled outcast. Jack had met homosexuals—businessmen, diplomats, artists—who carried off their difference with dignity, who indeed became more interesting, more thoughtful, more considerate because they were not like the majority of men. Cairo Thornton was not this kind. Like Rudenko he did no especial credit to the minority to which he belonged, except through his talent. And he seemed to regard his talent as a weapon rather than as a privilege or a trust. He had been too grievously wounded by society to be able to conceive any return obligation. He was an outlaw who

expected confidently—and impatiently—the cessation of law. He should be given extra sympathy and extra firmness.

“Why do you call art mere immaturity?” he demanded of Jack.

“I don’t.”

“That’s what you said!”

“I said nothing of the kind.”

“You heard it! Didn’t he?” Cairo Thornton appealed to Hank, who had been watching them intently.

“Didn’t he what?” Hank asked.

“You know you have a great admirer here,” Jack said to the playwright. “My niece. I’m sure she’d like to talk to you about your plays. She has invested some money in a dance company. Perhaps she might get interested in the theatre.” It took some time before Jack was able to put an end to a pointless discussion by crossing the room to get Sue and reintroducing Cairo Thornton to her, but after a few minutes, as Jack had expected, the playwright became more interested in a possible backer of plays than in a mere debate of ideas.

Rudenko came up and addressed himself flatteringly to Brent. “I’d like to go through your factory, Mr. Trimble. You make batteries, don’t you?”

“Yes.”

“For automobiles?”

“Yes.”

“I hear they’re good.”

“We think so.”

“They’re not only good,” said Jack, “they’re the best that can be made. You see, my brother is a rare type of manufacturer—he makes things that are *not* calculated to wear out.” He put an arm round Brent. Often enough before he had tried praise as a way to get close to him, and it had always failed, but he wanted to try again. “He never went into the automobile business, because as he says, it’s become a branch of the fashion business. He’s too solid, too much of an artist for stimulated obsolescence and all the other little tricks that automobile manufacturers use. He

likes to make things that last. Of course that's against the whole trend of the American economy, which is geared to over-consumption and over-production, and would go into a serious decline if only ten per cent of our people decided to become thrifty——"

Brent moved away from his embrace irritably. "Do we have to listen to all that again?"

Jack smiled unhappily. "He doesn't like my ideas, even when they express my deep respect for him. He prefers the ideas in those silly N.A.M. speeches that are written for him."

Rudenko looked uncomfortable and said, "I thought his N.A.M. speeches were very good."

"You see!" said Brent.

"Well, if you did," Jack said caustically, "you're not the same man who wrote the essays on Chekhov and Gorky that I was admiring the other night." His misgivings about giving an interview to Rudenko hardened instantly into a commandment.

"In what way?" Rudenko demanded challengingly.

"Let's talk of something else." Rudeness was the only way to deal with this kind of enemy. Years among Russians had taught him that. Both Communists and ex-Communists tried to bully the well-bred with appeals to good manners, of which they promptly took advantage. Like the Fascists, they recognised the advantage of inhibitions—in their opponents.

"But I'd like to talk about that!"

"Well, I wouldn't. Dr. Pomeroy!" With complete disregard of the magazine writer's feelings he addressed himself to the State Department man, "How long since you've been in the Middle East?"

"I just came back last month, sir."

He was questioning Dr. Pomeroy about his trip when Augusta went up to Brent, put a plate and some silver wrapped in linen in his hands, gave his arm a friendly squeeze which made him move away slightly, and bade him, "Please start eating. It gets cold so fast!"



Brent looked at her as he always did: as if she were the most wonderful thing in the world and also as if she bewildered him. As a boy he used to have almost the same expression on his face when he looked at a new Overland or a new Reo. Almost, but not quite. Confronted with the car, he soon got over his bewilderment. He still looked at Augusta, after two years, as if he didn't understand a word she said, and as if he would like nothing better than to escape from her.

Later, when they met briefly at the salad bowl, Jack put an affectionate hand on his brother's shoulder, to reassure him silently about his criticism of the N.A.M. speeches, but Brent moved his shoulder irritably, like a horse twitching off a fly, and Jack knew once again that it was hopeless to try to be friends with him.

At that moment Hank called to his Uncle Brent to come and take a seat which he had saved for him. He really seemed to want to sit next to his uncle. He had never done that for his father.

SUE looked forward to the dancing that would follow the buffet supper. It would be square-dancing, mostly; she had done it once before in Augusta's house, and she loved it. Also, the disagreeable references to her flop as a dancer that she had prepared for carefully had not been made. On the contrary, everyone had nothing but compliments for how quickly she caught on to the square-dance language, how beautifully she moved, and so on. She wished that her mother had let her do it when she was a child. Her mother, persuaded by her governess, had believed it was unlady-like.

But she couldn't get Cairo Thornton, whom she had been excited to meet, to share her enthusiasm. They were sitting next to each other, with their supper on their knees.

"Square-dancing is for squares," he said with a wry expression.

"Oh, but it's so beautiful!"

"Dancing is a lonely art," he said sadly. "Whoever your partner is, you're always dancing by yourself."

"What about ballet?"

"Ballet is the loneliest art of all. The worst irony is to *seem* to be dancing together. And then separate and go back to yourself."

"I don't see it that way at all."

"There was a time when ballet was a court art. There was a time when square-dancing was a folk art. My mama and papa did it—right here in Trimble. Now there's no court, and no folk. Our court is café society, and our folk are the relatives of our artists. Both something to get away from fast."

"I don't care, I like to square-dance!"

"There's no more hope for dancing, honey, than there is for love. Whoever your partner is, you're always making love to yourself."

"If I had ideas like that, I'd just kill myself." She realised that not long ago she *had* had ideas like that and *had* tried to kill herself. She had a sharp suspicion that he sensed the truth about her dangerous appetite for extinction, out of an extraordinary intuition that made him a good playwright, and now was improvising a little scene with her because she was so unhappy and so impressionable.

"There are some people, honey, who have to live with ideas like that all the time."

"Well, I don't want to."

"Then you don't want to be an artist."

"I guess I don't. I just want to enjoy life."

"Ha! If it were as simple as that!"

"Isn't it?"

"Anyone who enjoys life today, honey, is a monster, a saint, or an idiot."

"I guess I'm a monster, but I like to square-dance. I couldn't sleep all night afterwards, but I felt wonderful."

"Ah well, if that's the drug that's enough for you! Personally I like something a little stronger, a little more

forbidden. Tell me, is that young man really running for Congress?"

"Yes," and she added warningly, "He's my cousin."

"Oh, I won't say anything *against* him." The watery blue eyes ogled whiskily and indiscreetly, while she wondered why homosexual men confided so readily in her; it had happened often in the ballet.

"Too bad you don't know him better."

"I wish I did. I believe in the Golden Rule. Do unto others as you would have others do unto you."

"I don't think you'd like him."

"Honey, where beauty is involved, character is unimportant. But completely unimportant!" He waved his tumbler of Chianti for emphasis, and spilled it, and Dolores Something, the beautiful co-ed, came up with a gallon bottle, packed in red and green straw, and served him some more, while he murmured, "Ah, the girl with Chihuahua eyes!"

The spilt wine gave Sue an idea, and when Dolores Something, the beautiful co-ed, passed on with her jug of Chianti towards Hank, she excused herself from Cairo Thornton and followed her. It would be simple to give her a slight shove, just as she was pouring wine for Hank, and spill it all over him.

"I'm going to get some salad. Don't get up," Sue said to the little playwright, who made no move to get up. She walked in the direction of her parents and Hank, who were sitting together.

Her mother, of course, was finding fault with Augusta's house. Her taste had been formed by an interior decorator from Chicago who got his ideas from interior decorators from New York who, in turn, got their ideas from artists like Augusta. In five years Sue's mother would like Augusta's house because by that time it would have been photographed and imitated in fashion magazines and house and garden magazines and finally in picture magazines, and the interior decorator from Chicago would have told Mrs. Trimble of Trimble that she really had to throw out everything and start all over again. Of course he would never

tell her right out that she would be copying the other Mrs. Trimble of Trimble, but that was what his expensive advice would amount to. Meanwhile, however, she was attacking the style that she would ultimately admire.

Sue's father was listening patiently to his wife's whispers. Sue knew that she must never let herself feel sorry for him; softness could be her undoing. He had no understanding at all of the things that meant most to her, and would love nothing better than to see her give them up. Besides, he was not at all the patient, gentle administrator that he seemed. He was really as foxy as could be and always got what he wanted. Look at the way he was squeezing Uncle Jack and Augusta out of Trimble.

Hank was smiling up at Dolores Something, the beautiful co-ed, and saying, "Well, I haven't seen *you* for a long time, Miss Martinez! How have you been? Everything going all right at the college?"

The beautiful co-ed started pouring into his glass, and Sue saw her chance. She bumped clumsily into the beautiful co-ed's backside, and red wine went all over Hank's white shirt.

"I'm so sorry! Oh, Hank, isn't that awful!" Sue exclaimed. "Right on your beautiful shirt! I'm so sorry."

"It's all right, it's all right," he insisted, though his professional vote-getter's smile was a bit waner than usual, while Dolores hurried anxiously to the kitchen for a wet rag, which took out some of the stain but not all of it.

Sue felt better. It wasn't as much as she would have liked to do for Augusta and Uncle Jack, but it was all she had been able to think up just then. Later she felt terribly disappointed when Uncle Jack took Hank upstairs and gave him another white shirt that had exactly the same kind of button-down collar and was only a half-size too big for him. He looked almost as good as new. All her work for nothing! Two misfires in the same evening.

She was feeling blue until Eugene Rudenko, who had been the editor of the *Scythian Review*, came up and sat next to her and ate his dessert at her side. At least she was

sure of one thing: it was not like being talked to by Cairo Thornton, who had subtly desexed her. Eugene Rudenko did not treat her as if she were a neuter. Eugene Rudenko talked to her as if she were a woman, and an attractive one. Furthermore, he did not attack square-dancing when she said she was looking forward to it. He did not dance himself, he said, but he envied those who did. He was very nice, in fact, and she felt better than she had felt in months.

19

THE alert French eye of Gaby, always on the look-out for items for the astonishingly intelligent letters that she wrote home to her friend Monique, kept particular watch on Dolores, on Hank, on Augusta, on Jack. Dolores had protested more than once that she disliked Hank, yet she sat near him, as soon as her duties as cup-bearer permitted, and kept jumping up to fetch things for him. She had protested often against his strangely 'insulting' way of talking to her, yet she blamed herself for the incident of the spilt wine, which was not her fault, and sprinted nervously to the kitchen to get a wet cloth to clean a shirt that could not be cleaned.

This interested Gaby. And not merely because Dolores was her room-mate and she wanted to protect her from getting involved with a man whom she considered dangerous.

Dolores was fascinated by him, more than she would admit, but so were many other students. Nearly all of the students agreed that there was something sinister about him, something that reminded them of dangerous foreign demagogues, and yet when a poll on the local Congressional election had been taken by the college newspaper, the *Trimble Trivet* ('Right as the *Trivet*'), he had received about 80 per cent of the votes. His Democratic opponent, Harold Withers, who had a steadfastly liberal voting record in Washington, supposedly popular among students, on key issues such as aid to Europe, civil liberties, taxes, Point

Four, reciprocal trade, farm aid, and labour legislation, had received less than 20 per cent.

*'Ce jeune homme, pourquoi est-il tellement populaire?'* Gaby had already written in a long, lonely letter to Monique in Algiers. 'Why do the students say they mistrust him and then vote for him?'

'The poll was taken at college not long after a speech he was permitted to deliver before a convocation of the entire student body—an honour made possible by shameless misuse of his family's influence. (A similar invitation was not extended to his opponent. I learned this from my "beau" on the faculty.)

'In the course of his speech, which was ostensibly about education, and permitted because he had taken some graduate courses at Trimble, he quoted at length from another young veteran of World War II. This other young veteran's ideas had first appeared in the newspaper of a California university and later had been reprinted in a national magazine. I am translating them for you from our own college newspaper, the *Trivet*, but I can't convey the apparent disapproval with which they were read, an apparent disapproval that was really warm approval:

The educational system of America is failing the youth of America! . . . It is fashioning sparrows and putting them out to compete with hawks . . . Why on earth should we be taught this foolishness about honesty, truth, and fair play? . . .

If a student is majoring in law, he should be taught not only the laws but the most approved methods . . . of finding loopholes . . . If he is to be a doctor, he should not only learn medicine but how to milk the largest fees . . . If an engineer, how to construct with the cheapest of materials . . . if a journalist, how to slant, alter, lie . . . In the securities field . . . the different methods of watering stocks and duping the suckers . . .

Let us get up petitions to remove these namby-pamby professors . . . and get some good hard-headed business-

men in our colleges to teach us what we have to know to be a success.

But again, I can't convey how cleverly young Mr. Henry Trimble, whom everybody calls Hank, managed to seem to disapprove these ideas, while actually driving them home.

It was all extremely ingenious. At the same time he satisfied the students' desire for drama—I have never seen them sit up so intently or listen so carefully or applaud so spontaneously—and he also covered up so perfectly with moral denunciations of such horrible ethics that no one could say a word against him. He received an ovation, and I can't help thinking that his speech was aimed somewhat at his father—it is common campus gossip that he had a hand in getting his father fired from the faculty—who used to tell us quietly that a good technician finds solid satisfactions in his work that no manager will ever find, who used to quote that beautiful line from Rilke, "Cherish your obscurity!"

I have lived long enough now in America to be wary of all generalisations about it, even those of our divine Tocqueville, but I have come to one conclusion: the prevailing wind here is in the direction of the son, rather than the father. Only a few of the students discuss Trimble Senior any more, while Trimble Junior is a sensation! The whole college seems to believe that he has found the secret that all of them are looking for frantically. Even when they dislike him, they are afraid to say anything against him. He has magic. It's exactly the way our Arabs feel about a really nasty *caïd*. But I didn't expect so much primitivism here in the heart of modernity. America the brave new world seems to be hurrying towards the savage new conformity described so well by Orwell in 1984. Is this what the Greeks meant when they said that everything changes into its opposite? Please! Here is one sparrow who doesn't want to become a hawk!

Gaby was glad when Hank had to leave the party before there was time for him to eat his dessert. Both he and Mr.

Withers looked at their watches, and agreed they had to go, and then took a long time saying good-bye to everyone. They left together, but there were separate cars waiting outside to take them to the Legion Hall.

She was glad when these painful reminders of politics were removed from the scene. Ever since her father's disgrace she had longed for an unpolitical world and envied American girls who did not have to pay the price of paternal errors. And yet all her brilliant letters home were full of nothing but politics—though American now, not French.

She noticed that Augusta and Jack seemed relieved also when the election campaign took itself somewhere else. They were having a hard enough time maintaining their 'neutrality'—actually, she suspected them of planning to vote for Harold Withers—and enjoyed any respite from the dilemma created for them by Hank's ambitions. She had understood it more easily since the afternoon, when Augusta had told her in confidence of her pregnancy and of her determination to 'stay in bed the whole time' if it was necessary.

Jack looked happy when townspeople—ten or twelve of them, a carpenter, a house-painter, a hardware salesman, a union leader, an electrician, with their wives and some extra girls—began to arrive for the square-dancing. The music was to be provided by a fair-haired young man with a turned-up nose and an accordion about his neck who was also the 'caller' and did so well at it that he needed no day-time occupation.

While chairs and tables and work benches were being pushed against the walls, Jack introduced these newcomers to his brother and his other guests. His brother seemed to know them, but also seemed not to have had a chance to speak to them for a long time. Augusta had confided that one of the reasons for the party was to get Brent Trimble and his wife and his daughter to be better acquainted with some of the townspeople. "Jack is already so close to them, after being away all these years, but Brent hardly knows them any more. Jack thought it might be a good thing for



Brent. Brent has not been feeling well lately. And of course it's wonderful for Sue to have a chance to dance again. Just what she needs."

It was soon obvious, however, that Brent Trimble and Mrs. Trimble were not going to join in the dancing.

"Oh, come on, Father!" Sue begged. "Come on, Mother!" But they both made the same excuse, "I don't know how."

"We'll teach you!" Sue promised, and the fair-haired young caller promised to teach each new step carefully. But it was no use.

Gaby thought too much time was wasted on the manufacturer and his wife. Brent Trimble looked very uncomfortable and Mrs. Brent Trimble looked as if she disapproved of everything.

Gaby, meanwhile, was part of an eager circle of dancers, holding hands and getting ready to move gaily to left, right, or centre, as the caller directed them. On her left was an athletic young house-painter with a large, muscular hand that held hers ardently, though he kept his head turned away from her and only glanced at her now and then. Why were Americans so ashamed of *any* erotic impulses? On her right hand was Dr. Pomeroy, who told her that he could do the Virginia reel still, he thought. His hand was small and soft, but he seemed much more attractive than before and rather quick on his feet for a fat man.

At last the Brent Trimbles were given up for lost. When the accordion played and the dance began, only they and Augusta were sitting against the wall. And they didn't sit together.

NOTHING bothered Danny Greenup. He had had several drinks, almost as good a dinner as he would have had at home, and now he liked everybody, even the two Eastern snoopers who had upset him earlier in the day by reminding him of his failure in New York. Of course it would have been fun to grab the misguided heads of Rudenko and

Pomeroy in his arms and crack their heretical skulls together, but it was twenty odd years too late for that and he had to be content with the humble pie that was the regular diet in middle age of a former athlete. Good for his soul! His immortal soul that now, thanks to a few ricocheting shots of bourbon, was in tune with his broken, ponderous, carefree body.

He could relax. He didn't have to go to the new Legion Hall. His best reporter was there. In the morning the speeches would be on his desk, still much too long, and all he would have to do was surgery. Meanwhile, as soon as the accordion stopped, a gramophone was playing a Scottish air for a solemn Presbyterian folk-dance called ironically the Gay Gordons, and he sat it out, while the pipers blew, with Dena at his side, looking just as pretty, just as waxily blonde, as in her *Mademoiselle* days, though a trifle plumper, now that he was the breadwinner and she the stay-at-home. She soon dragged him across the floor, however, to pay their respects to Brent Trimble's wife. One of her oldest ambitions was to wangle an invitation to a party at his boss's almost impenetrable house.

Danny's Irish mother had never approved of his Protestant bride, but now the old girl was sweating it out in purgatory, while the new one got juicier on a chaise-longue, or chaise-lounge, and read books about psycho-analysis and told him all the mistakes that the old girl had made. It seemed she'd done everything wrong. All wrong. What a revenge he was having on the priestesses! They would break his hip, would they, for the glory of Our Lady! Just before it was time to join the old girl in the steam-room, he'd nip into a handy confessional and get his pass and stand in line. Why be impatient? Eternity lasted so long.

Meanwhile he had never felt so *safe* as when he had taken a Protestant wife. She got nervous and irritable at times, especially when she imagined someone was trying to put something over on her, but aside from that she was easy to live with, and when he thought of the chaos he had known in his mother's day he realised what a good woman he had

found to run his home for him. His children were well brought up, their health excellent, their marks at school much better than his had ever been, they studied music, they were well dressed, and they discussed things at table, geography, current events, other children, in a thoughtful way that he had not imagined possible. The food that he ate was superb, the service he received from servants incredible, and there was money in the bank and he owned his own house and his own car! No mortgages. People went out of their way to be nice to him. At last he really fitted in, and it was all due to Dena. Meanwhile all the sex he wanted—and he wanted a lot—and no guilt afterwards. There must be a catch in it somewhere, but he wasn't going to look hard for a long time. Things were going along too well. He had only to remember how filthy the same house had been in his mother's day, and how many times the bank had scared the daylight out of his father. Of course it wouldn't be smart to admit such things to Dena. And of course he hadn't written any poetry in a long time, but that would come later. Some day. He was hanging on to his old brown hat with the hole in it, and his old tweed jacket with the leather elbow patches, against the day when the dirt-loving, guilt-needing muse would consent to come back to his disinfected, psycho-analysed house. And, meanwhile, he was really getting good as an editor. Good enough for a job in New York. But a lot luckier to be in Trimble.

Dena had said just what he wanted to hear, after they had arrived at the party, by confirming his poor impression of Rudenko. During the ride to the party Rudenko had said something contemptuous about the New Deal, and Dena had let it pass, but later, in a whisper to Danny, she had whispered, "He's terrible. He's one of the most awful men I ever met."

Strangely enough, once Danny had been reassured that his dislike of Rudenko was all right, he began to like Rudenko better. Once Dena, the daughter of a Methodist minister and gifted with a not inconsiderable gift for moral denunciation, had said in effect that it was all right for him to

dislike Rudenko, he liked him better. After all, he *was* a good writer, and good writing didn't come from nothing. Beneath the shagbark there must be a slender willow tree. And it was somehow admirable of him to make a play for Sue Trimble right under Brent Trimble's nose—with the same unshakable attention that he had given to the dowerless Rosemary Bauer. When a man of so strong a will went after something he usually got it. And Sue had been waiting a long time.

The caller was out in the middle of the floor, with the accordion swinging on his checkered shirt-front, and squares were forming for a new dance. As usual Jack was the gayest man there. He loved to dance. Looking at him and his brother was like seeing the old fable reversed: the light-hearted grasshopper *not* punished when winter came, but blithe and supple, while the hard-working ant creaked in every arthritic joint and had nothing but apprehension for his pains. Jack was popular among the townspeople, and not only because he could do the old steps that had lingered on among them in spite of juke-boxes, but because he had done quite a bit of the carpentry and painting on his own house, and even some of the roofing. He was all wrong, however, in thinking that he could get the townspeople to like Brent, or vice versa. They didn't want it, and Brent didn't want it. Brent seemed to prefer distance to neighbourliness, and anyway he was too powerful in town to have any friends there. At the moment he looked as if he earnestly wished he hadn't come. And Sue wasn't making it any easier by pleading with him to "come on out and act human". Perhaps he would have come out if it hadn't been for the presence of Vern Brettschneider, the bullet-headed leader of the C.I.O. local at the battery plant. That brought up too many complications.

How close Rudenko stayed to Sue! And he had been dancing. He looked like a buffalo with horns, but still he danced.

It was nice of Jack to credit his brother with friendlier feelings than he was capable of, nice but not very bright.

Jack was always making that mistake. Merely because he felt good will toward others, he was sure his sentiments were going to be returned. Living once more in cramped and crabbed Trimble had convinced Danny of the folly of that kind of optimism, but apparently Jack had not yet caught on. Of course he was buried in his book now and didn't want to think too closely about his neighbours. And his life with Augusta had filled him with a hopefulness about humanity that he had formerly been able to guard against. And the intellectual excitements that had taken the place of energetic excitements, the middle-aged substitutes that he embraced as fervently as the real thing, the latest books on astronomy and optics and geology that he gobbled down with his regular diet of politics, economics, sociology, psychology, and literature, the enormous new tasks that he had set himself—in addition to writing, he was painting a little and also studying German—all these meant merely, as Augusta constantly told him, that he was losing his old shrewdness.

But you couldn't help admiring him. He was living the way that Danny also wanted to live—some day, when things were a little easier. And he looked very handsome when he danced. Danny's hip had begun to bother him, and now he was sitting on the sidelines. Also, he had had no idea that his wind was getting so short. His heart had climbed up into his temples, and for a moment he had thought he was going to pass out.

The little playwright had also given up after only one try, and was sitting next to him and they were talking about the theatre. They ignored the girls, who obviously wished they would resume their dancing. For a while Danny had wanted to be an actor—at Notre Dame he had played Hamlet after losing his job at left end—and so it was fun to pass the time of day with a man who had actually had the guts and the ability to make good in a racket that probably was the hardest of them all.

"I like your plays," he told the playwright.

"Thank you."

"You managed to get some poetry into them. That's rare."

"Thank you."

"I've got an idea for a play."

The playwright looked as blank as a reporter when told he ought to read a book now and then. "I'm going to get another drink."

"No, no, let me tell it to you. It's not as bad as you think." And Danny began to tell the playwright, after changing the names and the location and the century, the story of his own play, *The Toy Heron*, which had won some prize or other for him. The playwright listened intently, and Danny was just getting into the Third Act when Jack came up to him. The dancing and the music had stopped, and Jack looked angry.

"I'm going to have a statement for the *Times*, Danny," he said.

"Just a minute, Jack, I'm telling the man something. So the Duchess says to her son, 'Do you think I've been happy here in this castle while you've been out——?'"

"This is important, Danny."

"Just a minute!"

"Let him go on," the playwright pleaded.

"Danny," Jack repeated very seriously, while Brent came up, his face also disturbed. "I'm going to have a statement for the *Times*."

Danny rose to his feet and paid attention. "What's up?"

"Hank has just announced that I'm supporting him in the campaign."

"Where'd you hear that?" Danny's news-sense was immediately on the alert.

"On the radio. After the last dance. 'I'm not going to let him get away with this,'" Jack said, apparently as much to Brent as to anyone else. "I'm going to make a statement that everybody can see. I wasn't going to say anything about the campaign. Now I will."

Danny looked at Brent. He knew better than to speak before his boss had had a chance.

"Let's sleep on it," Brent said soothingly to his brother. "Maybe we'll all feel differently tomorrow."

"I *won't* feel differently!" Jack was really sore. "I know exactly how I'll feel. Danny, I want to make a statement for you to print in your paper."

Again Danny said nothing.

"Let's sleep on it," Brent repeated.

"Let's sleep on it, Jack old boy," Danny repeated after him.

"Then you won't print what I have to say?"

"I didn't say that." Danny had got his cue now from Brent, and knew he could handle everything from there on. "I just said, let's all of us give it a little more thought."

He excused himself quickly and went to Dena, who had stayed close to Brent's wife, and told her that they'd better go home. Brent and his wife were now saying good-night to Augusta, thanking her for a lovely evening, and so forth.

Danny felt sick when he looked across the room at Jack's face. Somehow or other Jack found something to be busy with when it was time for them to shake hands. "Good-night," he said briefly.

When Danny told Dena, outside, what he had done, she said, "That's right. You did the right thing. But how terrible——!"

They drove home in their car. It was pleasant to think that the car was all paid for. And their house too, when they got there. A light was shining in the living-room, where the baby-sitter was reading Gertrude Stein's *Paris, France* behind a pencil-marked volume of home economics. The children were all right, she said, in their neat little beds upstairs.

## PART TWO

### 21

AT about five-thirty the next morning Jack was awakened by a loud noise overhead. At first he could not pay much attention to it because he was involved, and deeply, with a dream it had interrupted, a dream about his father.

His father half-lay, half-stood, in a clay-coloured ditch, together with many other old men who were *going west*, and Jack, *who wanted to write something*, had to get down into the ditch and take a fountain-pen from his father's pocket. But in doing so he woke his father, who spoke to him affectionately. This was disappointing. Jack had not wanted to be recognised by his father, but merely to get the pen for his writing job and slip away unnoticed.

Already, before he was fully awake, he knew it was sad that even now, when he had as many years on him as there were cards in a pack—and a grown son of his own—he still did not want his father's love. He still preferred to be as unforgiving toward the old man as Hank was toward himself. A father could re-visit one nocturnally in quest of absolution, and be most pitiable while he did it, and yet Jack clung to his youthful hardness of heart. By this time he knew from personal experience the sorrows of a father, and yet at heart he remained a stubborn, judgeful son.

How could he expect any more from Hank than the hatred he was getting? His own filial bitterness was every bit as unrelenting.

Did the dream mean that, to carry off the fountain-pen of style, he must confront his father and return his father's love? Did his new literary ambitions require a full acceptance of his ancestry and a specific pardon for the injuries done him by a particularly improvident sire?

The noise overhead kept on—loud, persistent, rhythmic



—and he did not understand it. The two guests, Gaby and Dolores, had two rooms overhead on the second floor. One of them seemed to have risen before day and to be making a new dress for herself on a sewing machine that had been poked away in a closet. On the other hand, she might be ironing out an old dress for the afternoon's football game. Or entertaining a full-back, an especially vigorous lover. All were likely answers and as spontaneous as the noise. He could not sleep, and since war had trained him to investigate any strangeness, he got out of bed and looked out of a window. In daybreak greyness, against a quietly violent background of oaks and maples and elms, he saw bits of wood, sometimes three or four inches long, and always too large for sawdust, floating down from above.

At last he understood the noise and the criminal responsible for it.

His bedroom belonged to a capacious suite of rooms that he occupied separately, so that he might get up in the middle of the night, as had become his custom, without waking Augusta, to go on with the writing of the book that was now the repository of his passion as much as any woman or any business deal or any governmental assignment had ever been. Of all trades the literary was the last he had expected to get into. And yet it already seemed natural to his present stage of life, and he consoled himself by thinking of those professional colleagues—geophysicists, soldiers, diplomats, even salesmen and administrators, and all of them barely literate—whom it had also surprised. The appetite for words must accompany some hormonal malnutrition. A purple-eared corps commander had taken more satisfaction in his poems than in his grandchildren, and a timid banker had brought forth a new organon.

'Now I suffer insomnia over mere ideas,' he had written in one of the notebooks that he filled two a month when he wasn't at his never-covered typewriter, 'and am as dissatisfied with a bad sentence as I was formerly with a bad marriage.'

He slipped on his monkish black dressing-gown and

slipped out into the hall of the first floor, avoiding floorboards that were known to creak. Augusta was a light sleeper, especially at that hour, and he had to be careful not to waken her as his slippers cat-padded down the old New England soft-coloured runner which had been found in the attic and looked so well tacked down on the front staircase. The glass transom and sidelights over the front door let in the light that was slowly coming up in the East, with just enough grey and just enough white to re-jewel the stars. No traces remained of last night's party. The girls had done their job well, down to the last ash-tray. Passing through the studio filled his head with plaintive folk airs to which he had lately danced, but otherwise the house was silent and had resumed its woman's dream of order and cleanliness.

Outside there was so much mist that neither the lake could be seen nor, in the other direction, the gilded stallion on top of the red barn. Once the barn, flanked demagogically with buckeye trees by the Governor, had been merely a jolly reminder of the McKinley opulence of his grandfather's day, with all memory scars of his father forgotten, but lately he had been wincing slightly whenever he looked at it, because Hank had remarked wistfully that he wished *he* had grown up with that grand American barn near-by, instead of in cosmopolitan New York.

The implication was clear, "If only you'd stayed with Mother, Dad, everything would have been different, we'd be happy now, there wouldn't be any feud between us."

Jack doubted it, and yet it made his heart ache. The boy had talent; he knew how to make words stick.

Jack had started to tell him that his own memories of the barn were not always pleasant. It was into the same barn that his own father—the famous whoremonger Randy Trimble—had crept early one morning to die, after having been slashed by the piano-playing husband of a certain coloured woman in the red-light district called Trixie. It would have been too long a story to tell, why Randy had gone to the barn rather than to the house, how his wife had felt about him, and what his children had suffered because of him.

But now the criminal was clearly visible. And it was not a squirrel as Jack had thought, which was gnawing into the cornice above his bedroom. It was a raccoon, the same unusually big male raccoon that he had chased away once before, and the noise it made was louder than any sewing machine or any ironing board or any lover. Not until he threw a stone and made a lucky hit did it stop, and then so dramatically and so cunningly that it seemed to be dead. But he knew it was playing possum, and he also knew it would stay up there, theatrically spread out on a rain-pipe, until he went away, when it would begin its gnawing again. And that would be ruinous, for if it ever got inside the walls it might not easily be dislodged, and meanwhile an entrance of at least eight inches long would be left for rain-water.

There was only one thing to do, on this day of all days, when he was going to be plunged whether he liked it or not into a political campaign and would have to have his wits about him. The raccoon had to be shot, and since he wasn't sure where his rifle was, or whether he still had it, he had better call the police. They could do the job while he was getting ready for the war declared by Hank.

He padded back to the silent house over new red maple leaves, beauties lately fallen. Below them lay last year's brown belles and last year's brown pine needles. He was still half asleep but he decided not to go back to bed. There was too much work to do.

ON the telephone the policeman's voice had the extra respect that was always given whenever the name Trimble was mentioned. "Yes, sir! I'll get me a rifle and come right up. Yes, sir!"

It was a tone Jack had not expected to hear ever again when he left off touring embassies and legations, and it made him smile a few minutes later while he was getting his own breakfast in the kitchen. Such deference ill became the literary life, which begat humility, which in turn begat dis-

respect. He was taking toast from the toaster, and the clock was pointing to six-fifteen, when Augusta came into the kitchen looking pale. His best efforts had not failed to prevent her from waking up, and she wanted to know what had happened. He kissed her and begged her to go back to bed, but she wouldn't. And so he made tea and toast for her and told her about the raccoon, which he forbade her, however, to see. And then a police car drove up.

By this time the sun had risen and the mist was dispersing. He went outdoors to meet the police. There were two of them.

One of them wore a blue uniform, the one he had spoken to on the telephone. His name was Hollenbeck, and his brother worked for Trimble Batteries. His cheeks had the reddish tan of continual exposure to the sun, and it turned out that he often directed traffic on Main Street. Strapped on the outside of his tunic was a holster, and in it a .45 Colt revolver. His eagerness to be helpful was shown again not only by the speed of his arrival but by his offer to "take care of the whole thing". Also, he saluted when he got out of the car and walked up to Jack.

Jack was enjoying a revival of old honours until he looked more closely at the man who had come with Hollenbeck. This other man was not in uniform. He wore a scarlet deer-stalking cap, a handsome tan suède jacket over a red plaid flannel shirt, tan corduroy trousers, and laced boots that came almost to his knees. His cheeks were still redder than Hollenbeck's, he was tall and heavy-set, and his blue eyes were pale and catlike. He carried a small rifle that looked exceptionally well made and well cared for. There was a hostility about him which Jack associated with a similar type of man whom he had encountered in the Deep South, though less richly attired, a type known as a Cracker. No word of greeting came from him, only a contemptuous stare which contained a surprising amount of disgust.

"I don't believe I know you," Jack said pleasantly, holding out his hand. "My name's Trimble."

The man in the hunting suit did not take his hand.

"Bill's in the Sheriff's office. He's a deputy," Hollenbeck explained quickly. "You're out beyond the town limits, so by rights the Sheriff's office ought to do this anyhow."

"Well, I'm certainly obliged to you both," Jack said pleasantly, "for coming so soon. The coon's around this way." He led them to where they could see the animal, about forty feet above the ground, still playing possum in the rain-pipe. A black hindfoot hung over an edge, as if it were lifeless. Its nails were over an inch long.

"There he is!" shouted Hollenbeck with the joy of recognition.

"Do you want me to throw something at him? To make him move?" Jack asked.

"No," said the hunter, as if displeased at having to address him at all. His speech was Southern, and no doubt he was one more migrant drawn from the Cracker country by the high wages paid at the battery plant.

"I don't want you to hit the rain-pipe."

"I won't hit it." The Cracker-hunter studied where to take his position, found a spot which gave him a clear shot, aimed, and fired. The rifle made relatively little noise, so little that it might not even wake the guests.

Almost as soon as the shot had been fired the raccoon had raised his head. His eyes were now open, but his body became rigid again in its new position.

"Get him?" asked Hollenbeck.

"Right through the head," said the hunter quietly.

"Don't see no blood," Hollenbeck said sceptically.

The hunter aimed again. Another sharp puff, and the raccoon swung his open-eyed head round again, like a punched boxer, and again froze. This time his eyes were on the ground, with a look in them of reproach and melancholy. The black rings under them reminded Jack of a played-out lover.

"Get him?" asked Hollenbeck.

"Right through the head," said the hunter quietly.

"Don't see no blood."

"Give me your pistol!" The hunter seemed annoyed.

Hollenbeck took the revolver from his holster, and the hunter took aim from a new position, this time shooting through the branches of a tree. The report was much louder, and a large bullet hole appeared in the white rain-pipe, but there was also blood on the shoulder of the raccoon, which slowly moved out of the rain-pipe and on to the roof, like a wounded gangster in a film who had yelled a defiant "Come and get me!" and then entered with dignity into his final scene. He was not playing dead any more. He stood up on his hind legs, and as he did so he looked like the small bear that he actually was, rather than like the rodent that he was popularly—and, in French, officially—supposed to be.

Wearily on all fours he climbed the roof towards the ridgepole.

"There he goes!" shouted the excitable Hollenbeck. "Get him!"

The two officers ran to the other side of the house, as if they really were after a criminal, and Jack ran after them. Their haste was justified. No sooner did the thrice-killed actor reach the ridgepole than he changed his rôle, ceased to hobble, ran swiftly down the other side of the roof, leapt twenty-five feet to the ground, and darted to the barn faster than any dog could have followed him.

Jack knew he was heading for an old hole in the barn, and decided to let him die there in peace. The last shot must have wounded him seriously, despite his present speed. Much better to let him die there in peace, as Randy Trimble had done.

Jack ran in front of the policemen when they turned and started to pursue the raccoon to the barn.

"No! No!" he shouted. "Don't go there. Let him alone!"

The hunter wanted to go on. "Whaddya mean? We could get him."

"I don't want you to get him."

"Why'd you call us, then? I'm gonna go get him!"

"No, you're not!" Jack grabbed the hunter's well-dressed shoulder.

"Leggo o' me!" The hunter looked as if he wanted to knock him down. He still had the revolver in his hand. "Leggo o' me, you ——!" He had been on the point of saying something very unpleasant.

"Aw now, Bill," said Hollenbeck soothingly.

"Here!" Jack took a ten-dollar bill which he had put in his pocket after calling the police. "Thanks for coming. You must have a police fund."

The hunter would not take the bill. It see-sawed to the ground. "No, we don't have no fund. We don't want your money." The hunter checked himself again, and walked away abruptly to the police car, where a radio was calling, ". . . green Chevrolet with Kentucky licence number three five nine five two Kenton County repeat three five nine . . ." and slammed the door after him.

Hollenbeck murmured a confused apology, and Jack picked up the bill and insisted that he take it. Finally he did. He got into the police car and drove it away, waving a friendly good-bye as he pulled out of the driveway. The hunter, meanwhile, stared straight ahead.

"What happened?" Augusta asked when Jack returned to the kitchen. "Did they kill it?"

"I suppose so."

"Why didn't the man take the money?"

"I don't know."

"He seemed awfully mad about something."

"Yes. Now I guess I'd better fix up the hole the coon made. There's some copper stripping somewhere."

"What was he so mad with you about?"

"I don't know."

AT about eight o'clock Augusta called him to the telephone. He was at the top of a long ladder, putting white paint over the copper that now covered the hole made by the raccoon.

"It's Danny," she said.

"Go inside. You'll catch cold."

"He says it's important."

"I don't want to talk to him."

"Please come down. It's important." She walked away slowly, after begging him again to take the call.

He made Danny wait several minutes. Then he answered coldly, "Hello."

"Hello. . . Something's come up. First of all, I'm sorry about last night. But if you think about it you'll see that I couldn't do anything else. But this new thing is more important."

"All right, let's have it."

"It's sort of complicated. Remember that guy you had at your place last night. The playwright. I'm not mentioning any names. Well, it seems he's staying at a certain hotel, and the house dick there was told by certain people to be on the look-out for any information he could get about this playwright."

"Go on."

"Well, the house dick found something. Something very juicy. I'm sending my copy over to you."

"Your copy?"

"Yes, it's already been photographed and copies made. On that photo-copier they use in the Sheriff's office for tax records and so forth. We've got a pipe-line in the Sheriff's office. That's how we know. Seems they didn't get to bed 'until four o'clock this morning. They were up all night, photographing this journal."

"What journal?"

"The one the playwright keeps. *Very* juicy. Maybe even criminal. I think I see the fine Italian hand of your son somewhere. Those guys in the Sheriff's office would never have thought of this one. You think your son pulled a fast one last night on the radio. Well, this is a lot faster."

"I don't follow you at all."

"Just think. If the word ever got around that you and this playwright, the one who wrote this juicy journal, were



the same kind of guy—well, you know what guilt by association can do.”

“But I’m *not* that kind! And I never saw him before yesterday!”

“Whose house did he visit when he came here? Who was friendly to him? By the time you got through explaining it away, the harm would have been done. You’ve got a very ingenious boy. First he puts you squarely on his side, and then he discredits you before you have a chance to say anything in reply.”

“But that’s ridiculous. Everybody knows——”

“Of course, of course, but when this kind of campaign starts, who’s going to stop to remember what they know? Everybody forgets what they thought they knew and begins to think what they’re supposed to think. Anyway, long enough to——”

“But nobody ever connected me with *that* sort of thing! Too many marriages, but not *that*!”

“Doesn’t matter, old boy. You’ve been ruined before you ever even opened your mouth in this election. Anything you say from now on will be distorted. And *this* kind of a smear will stay with you as long as you stay in town. He’s really clever, that boy of yours!”

Jack was silent. Now he understood the strange disgust of the hunter, who worked, of course, in the Sheriff’s office and had doubtless read the playwright’s journal. He had *already* experienced the smear campaign without knowing it! The hunter had insulted him and had felt perfectly justified in doing it.

But how had Hank ever, even in the heat of an election campaign, imagined such a thing about his father? Once, it was true, when Hank had shown intolerance toward homosexuals, whom he was attacking in the Legislature as a menace to schoolchildren, Jack had remonstrated with him and told him flatly that no biologist would sustain his claim that homosexuality was unnatural. On the contrary, he had said, scientific observers had shown that man was naturally bi-sexual and that some bi-sexual societies had made great

contributions to civilisation. Hank had called such thinking 'pseudo-liberal' and against every decent value. If this forgotten argument was the source of Hank's weird attack, if Jack was now being punished for being a tolerant heterosexual, if his scientific references were now being used against him, it was simply one more case where an American demagogue was imitating, with equal disregard for truth, the best German, Italian, and Russian masters. We had got the intellectual basis for democracy from Europe; now we were getting from the same continent the intellectual basis for anti-democracy.

Jack's silence lasted so long that Danny finally asked, "Are you listening?"

"Yes."

"I don't like telling you all this, but——"

"Oh, I'm glad you called. I've known since last night that I have to get tough, but now I see that I'll have to get a lot tougher than I thought."

"What are you going to do?"

"I'll have to think about it."

"Well, I just want you to know that I'm—on your side. Only there are some things I can't do."

"So I gather." Jack did not withdraw his indignation.

"I guess I'd better get back to work. Saturday paper goes to press half an hour early. Town fathers are having a special meeting this a.m. Have to cover it myself. Still having trouble at the waterworks. I'm sending you my copy of the journal by special messenger. My best copy boy. Just got out of reform school. Watch him like a hawk. Good-bye now."

When Jack hung up he had to explain what he had heard to Augusta, who had been listening to what he said but not to what Danny said. When his explanation was finished she became deeply discouraged.

"Hank's beaten you already," she commented.

"Nonsense!"

"I didn't realise he was so clever." She wasted no time at all on recriminations, but simply faced the situation. After

all, she had had some political experience in London, where her one-time brother-in-law Gerald Jerrold was a Member of Parliament.

"There are lots of things I can do." But he didn't feel as confident as he sounded.

"Nobody will take you seriously from now on."

"But just because the man visited me once! You only have to take one look at me to know I'm not *that* kind."

"Doesn't matter." Her dismal assurance was beginning to make him angry. "Everybody will see it in you from now on."

"Don't be ridiculous!"

"I'm not, unfortunately. Once this kind of thing——"

There was a knock on the front door, which always sent reverberations through the whole house. It was the copy boy from the *Times*, red-haired, freckled, with a turned-up nose and a choir loft innocence in his eyes. He smirked at Jack when he handed him a large envelope. "Here you are, Mr. Trimble!" And he swished ever so slightly in a brilliant imitation of effeminacy.

When he was gone Augusta exclaimed, "You see what I mean? Nobody will believe a word you say. Let's not have any optimism. This sort of thing will spread like wildfire. I could swear that boy had been reading it."

They sat down at the kitchen table together, so that they might read the photostatic copy of the journal at the same time. When they came to the end of the first page they looked at each other, to see if each was finished, and then eagerly went on to the second. Also, they glanced at each other, as if to acknowledge that, however disagreeable the document was in its effect upon their lives, at least they had to admit that it made good reading. In style it was less interesting than Cairo Thornton's plays, for he was the kind of writer who had to write about others to find himself, but they had never before been permitted to see the frank self-revelations of a man of his kind.

To judge by incidental markings that the camera faithfully reproduced, the journal seemed to have been written

in pencil in a cheap notebook such as French schoolboys use in class. Also, the journal seemed actually to be a long, unsent letter.

Nice

DEAR BOY,

All roads lead to Rome, and I am now on my way there, sitting on my luggage in the station at Nice, waiting for the train to pull in. It is the first bright day since I arrived in Europe. Rain, rain, all but continual! I spent about two weeks in Paris and after wild dissipation, staying up drinking all night, I landed in the American Hospital in a 'toxic condition' for three days. Soon as I got out I left for St. Paul de Vence where I have just spent a week. —The train is here! We are now pulling out of the station. Oh, this marvellous sun! It is right on my face and I love it!

I feel pretty good now—knock wood! However, I am not very bright and my writing does not catch fire. I'm pecking away at one-acters for lack of other inspiration. I feel strangely the same, though, as I did back in Hollywood, seven years ago, when I decided that I had to become a myth and made the great change from Chester Thornton to Cairo Thornton. Now maybe if there's time I'll run down to Egypt and see what the original Cairo is like. If I don't have to fly. It's probably a little more exciting than the Ohio River town where I was born. I understand that in Cairo, like all North Africa, certain stupid prejudices do not exist. Anyway, I think I might begin to click soon.

Travelling alone is a bit frightening at times. Other times it is exciting. The wine of solitude. I look forward to Rome. I had two lovely affairs in Paris, one a piece of living sculpture who works in the Renault factory, making *automobiles*, the other a charming little chick who, I fear, is still struggling with *moral* scruples! Actually prudish,

or was it all put on? I met him at a nice dancing place called Mon Domaine. When it is warmer I will return to Paris and really look into things. *Allons! En avant!*

#### Later

We are now pulling out of Ventimiglia, and there is a fair weather sunset in the Mediterranean. I am in Italy! The country is full of flowers and the sea is turquoise. Snow-covered Alps are visible way off. I am sharing my compartment with a pleasant English couple of middle years, and I cannot help wondering if the husband was not queer when he was younger—and more interesting. Now everything he says is so dull, so stuffy. But nice.

#### Rome

Tino has just left and I have ordered coffee and a sandwich sent to my room at this small, dark hotel, where they do not seem to mind my kind of visitors. The new room is much better. It has a large balcony over the street below. Lying in a bed that Heliogabalus would have approved of I can see, with the french doors open, the night sky as I grow sleepy. But sleep seems tyrannical tonight and I resist it. I have a weird and confused dream about a good-looking, tall young negro boy back in Trimble, Ohio, and it seems to contain Freudian images, but I'll be damned what they are! Trimble was very interesting for a Northern town. Once it was a station on the Underground Railway. We were very poor when we lived there. We lived in a one-room house with a dirt floor, five people and three geese. We were as dirty as the geese. There wasn't a bath-tub. In the night I could hear the love-making. Papa would grunt like a pig, and I thought how dirty it was. How I hated the people who had clean white sheets and smelt good!

I like Rome. I must limit my activities, however, to stay well. Sometimes I behave like a pig. My inability to release any steam in my writing makes me want more diversion than is healthy.

Thursday

I am supposed to fly to Sicily tomorrow, but I doubt that I shall. I can't get over my dread of planes, and I don't feel like pulling up stakes here. Life goes pleasantly enough. Actually, I 'never had it so good'. For the past two days I have abstained from sex and today, perhaps only coincidentally, I managed to do some work on the new full-length play. No title yet. It's about the importance of *not* falling in love, of *not* being tricked by nature, of *not* becoming bourgeois. The trick is to get women to *enjoy* seeing a play which shows how dangerous their own sex is to all that is creative and beautiful in man. As my English friend Hugh puts it, "to make them pay for watching their own denigration". I don't think I've ever denigrated them as a sex, but he says that's my secret, just as it's Maugham's. I can see where it's true of Maugham, but I do not think it's true of my plays.

Hugh's full of tall stories, and because he's English I believe them. He startled me this evening by saying he's had an operation for cancer. I wonder if that is so. I am not as trustful as I used to be, especially with charming, clever boys who don't support themselves. Still, he's the most entertaining non-sexual company I have had since I came to Rome. We just talk, but it's very agreeable, and I don't mind buying him a meal now and then. Money! Who would ever have thought that the time would come when I'd never have to give it another thought. I'm sure my agent is robbing me right and left, ever since I gave him that power of attorney, but even so there's enough money in the trust fund to take care of me for the rest of my days. If only Mama were alive to see this!

Yes, I am going after all. To Sicily.

And it makes me feel good to act in spite of the fear. So is the spirit liberated in the only way possible on this perilous sphere. So long!

## Sicily

I don't know why I came here. A let-down. The film-making was tedious, and Rogers and his boy-friend are completely wrapped up in each other. Also I have diarrhoea. But the worst is my dullness of mind. Even this letter I can't write with any ease. But if I keep hammering maybe something will happen at last. Only one letter forwarded, from the nice little Canadian boy who made my last week in New York so happy.

Sunday is always a bad day for me. Looked at the manuscript and put it away. Drove around in a cab and was outrageously overcharged. Stomach all right, but the lower section still bad. Walked feebly around the Borghese Gardens and when the sun had lost its vigour, as I had mine, returned to my hotel, removed my clothes, and collapsed on my bed again. Ah me, of what interest is all this! Only for brief intervals do I live like a bright bulb turned on for a few minutes. My dullness at other times is phenomenal. For years I haven't really been interested in anyone, only what I can get out of them—for the written page. I do not know myself. What is this creature, this scribbler I live with? What does he want? What is he trying to do?

Reading Huxley. Early novel. Not sensual enough to be my dish. But he makes me laugh.

If only I could get the lighted river-boats going in my brain! And create with power and certainty as I have at rare moments when I was loved by the gods!  
*En avant!*

## Tuesday

I'm cold. It's really cold tonight. Bowels better—paregoric. As for work, zero!

Tonight I have another date with Tino. Which I don't want to keep but will. My affections are transient these days, and it's better that way. This is a fugitive time in my life. *En avant!*

Friday

I'm still dating Tino. Begins to be a problem. I can't help feeling a certain responsibility. The tender web. Better slip out of it before you're tied.

*The Tender Web.* Maybe that's the title for the new play. Yes! I like it. But let's wait and see. Anyway, it's going better now. Beginning to move. I actually had an idea or two today.

Health? Rather surprisingly good. No more diarrhoea.

Sexually it's a bull market. I have never been so full of manly vigour. The fear of impotence has not occurred at all lately.

Tomorrow a new caller, a lovely student, in the afternoon. And Tino at night. I also have a bedside radio. And swell coffee. This is a list of my blessings.

Get to work, baby. That's the only blessing will do you any real good. *En avant!*

Wednesday

Tomorrow will be my birthday. I have had static periods before, but I don't think any in which I seemed so completely uncreative. What to do about it? Just complaining and worrying are not enough.

The sex life continues to flourish. La Primavera is golden and warm. Now several other members of the Hominform, as somebody called it, are here, and we fish together in a sunny aquarium. The *Scythian* says the largest American exportation is homosexuals.

Yesterday I was taken to see Santayana at the Convent of the Blue Nuns. As I have read none of his works, the meeting meant less to me than it did to Wilfrid, who practically worships the old man.

He had an air of serenity that was lovely. Some day I must read him. But I fear philosophy. It might stop the play-writing. Later, when I'm dried up . . . I'll read.

I will now go eat. Just coffee is not enough. Tino comes tonight. I must get ready.



Sunday

Worse than ever! A sticky do! Everybody is leaving Italy. Guy and I do the streets when Tino is not with me. Tonight we had a pair that we sent home as immaculate as they arrived—too young! Afterwards I tried to write—perhaps abstinence would pay. It didn't! The body remains well, in spite of too much coffee and most irregular habits. So long!

Monday

'The immaculate pair' returned tonight and there was a great festival of Priapus. Schoolboy voices not yet changed, and soft down on their cheeks. Cherries fell. It was a celebration. I got a telegram this morning that *White Columns* won the Prize. But actually it didn't mean very much to me. I'm too caught up in *The Tender Web*.

Later—how much later?

I have quit trying to work. Mind seems utterly torpid, except for the nightly anxiety over falling asleep.

Now my health has broken. Diarrhoea and no appetite at all. No crisis of nerves, just a continual depression. I guess I've mishandled the Grand Tour as badly as any congressman. Felt practically no elation when the other Prize came to me too.

Maybe it is just a matter of not being young any more. My friends complain silently that I am a dull companion. I talk less than ever. Rarely more than two sentences at a time, and it frightens me to search for words. People actually don't want to see me again. Playwriting did it. I started out hating the middle class, and now I seem to myself as middle class as anyone else—just a manufacturer of entertainment.

Interruption. Members of the Hominform here to plan a campaign to put over Dirk's book about North Africa in New York—who is to review it for the *Times*, *Tribune*, *New Yorker*, *Saturday Review*, etc., etc. I drew the *Times*,

because I know them there. I'll send off a letter tomorrow. This is serious. We must stick together.

Sex as abundant as ever, but now rather stale, routine. The Romans are all pretty much alike—gentle, affectionate, easy. No surprises. Still sex remains the one great solace. I try not to become too fond of Tino. I must leave him here, and soon. *Allons! En avant!*

Maybe I'd better break with some others too. Gide says "constancy in friendship can prevent a man from advancing, can even pull him backwards; after a certain point one can only go forward alone".

Maybe I'm getting ready for real solitude. I'll go to a cool place for the summer, and then in the fall I'll look in on Trimble. It might be the right setting for *The Tender Web*.

25

JACK enjoyed the journal. Not only did it give him a glimpse of a new world, it freed him from worry. Anyone who read this would be sure to see that *he* could never, by the farthest stretch of the imagination, be associated with it. Hank's ghastly stratagem would backfire, and the only one injured would be himself. So the more his father read, the better he felt, and at the end he wished it had been longer.

Augusta let her half of the stiff photo sheets fall. "I wonder what's happened. When I read about such things in Proust they had dignity. Now they are merely vulgar. Why is that?"

"I don't know," said Jack with the new interest in æsthetic problems he had developed while living with an artist. "I suppose the energy problem of our artists is now so acute that they don't even struggle against their traditional infantilism. And when they happen to be homosexual—Anyway, I hope a lot of people see this thing. The more people see it, the more people will realise the absurdity of trying to mix me up with it."

"What makes you so sure?" she asked with annoyance.

He laughed. "You forget. I have a bad reputation in Trimble, but of an entirely different kind. I'm regarded as a sinner, of course, but not *that* kind. Too many wives, but not even one little boy. Come to think of it, I wish I had. The soft down on those schoolboy cheeks had me all worked up."

She brushed aside his feeble joke. "How can you be so stupid?" she demanded.

He began to get annoyed too. "Now listen, Gus! Nobody in his right mind is going to connect me with that. And I don't want to discuss it further!" He knew that she had a right to be annoyed with him, because if he had not produced so ingenious a child as Hank she would not be confronted with an unprecedented situation that might jeopardise the much younger child that she hoped to bear him. On the other hand, he was not going to let her talk as if anyone would take the thing seriously.

She glared at him. "Are you blind? Didn't you see how that copy boy behaved? What more proof do you want? The whole town laughing at you?"

"They'll never believe a thing like that." But he recalled the words almost flung at him by the hunter.

"I'll bet they've already started."

"Aren't you over-estimating their capacity for malice? Not to mention their credulity?"

"Don't talk like that! You make me wild. We've got to do something, and you go on as if——!" She checked herself and took his hand affectionately. "I'm sorry, dear, but my nerves are simply shot. I feel rotten enough in the morning anyway, without this!"

He kissed her, and was rubbing the back of her neck, which always helped calm her, when they heard steps on the staircase. It was Gaby and Dolores, coming down gaily to breakfast. After they had all greeted one another, and he and Augusta had pretended nothing had happened, he took the photostatted journal with him to his suite, and locked it in a grey steel filing-cabinet. Augusta meanwhile went with the girls to the kitchen, where they got

their breakfast and seemed to have a good effect upon her.

He sat down before his typewriter, at his desk, heavily. Sudden weariness had overtaken him. The only thing he was sure of was that *he did not know what to do*. His early morning resolve to outplay Hank at his own game had gone with the mist that accompanied it. The sun shone brightly now and he was in the dark. After but two moves by a born politician he was so utterly routed that he wondered if he would *ever* have been a match for him. All his experience in New York, Texas, Baku, Moscow, Istanbul, Paris, London, Tehran had simply flowed out. And it had not been an adequate preparation anyway. Not for his present predicament.

He had to come up with a way to attack Hank, to hurt him, and as badly as Hank had hurt him. Self-preservation demanded it. Not to mention everything he was working for. And everything Augusta was working for. If ever ruthlessness was justified, it was now. The boy was dangerous—not only to him, to her, but to society.

He had to be beaten, and beaten badly.

Usually when Jack phrased a question so clearly to himself, an answer came. *Some* answer, based on his nature and his experience, that could be refined and sharpened later.

This time no answer came. No answer at all. *He did not know what to do*. Augusta was right. His new intellectual habits had dried up his political skills. He had lost them while developing an occupational detachment. No man can serve two masters. No man can serve both his will and his mind. They are sure to conflict.

No wonder she was angry with him. In developing the new detachment that she so much respected him for, he had lost the ability to defend her. He was going to fail her now, in a time of crisis, because he had done what she wanted him to do. For that she would never forgive him.

The telephone was ringing in her room, and since she was downstairs he went to answer it. As he went he thought, 'Maybe it will give me a clue.' At the same time he despised

the hope that still existed, beneath all his discipline, that help could ever come, on an essential matter, from the outside.

The call was from Danny's wife. She spoke with the brisk voice that she had developed in her *Mademoiselle* days, when she had to keep advertisers happy. "Hello, Jack, Dena. We had a nice time last night, but that's not what I'm calling about. Jack, Danny has told me about it. You know what. Yes, you know. Well, you might describe it that way. I can't say, I haven't read it. Danny sent you his only copy. He was lucky to get that one. But he gave me a sort of an idea what it's like. Look, today's Saturday, see? I can't go out, the kids are home. I thought maybe—you know, two heads are better than one and all that. I've had some experience with some pretty tough monkeys. Maybe we could work out something together." Obviously she was trying to make up for the rather undignified departure of herself and Danny the night before. "Why don't you come over here? Bring it along with you. Maybe we could——"

He was just getting ready to decline politely when he heard Augusta's voice on the downstairs extension wire. She had been listening to everything without saying a word. "I think it's a marvellous idea, Dena. Thanks very much. I'll see that Jack goes right over."

He didn't try to protest, but agreed to go. It felt good to realise that someone was on his side, although he knew in advance nothing would come of it. If there *was* any answer, he would have to produce it himself. That much he felt sure of. That much he knew.

AUGUSTA returned to the kitchen, sat down with Gaby and Dolores, and knew that her week-end was ruined. It would be impossible to enjoy, much as she wanted to, their company. The telephone call from Dena, though an encouragement, had convinced her that some kind of disaster was inevitable.

And Gaby and Dolores gave her exactly the kind of young, sensitive, *feminine* companionship that she wanted just then. Too bad. She couldn't appreciate it. She couldn't even let it in.

She had especially wanted to get to know Dolores because it was obvious that there was something exceptional in the girl and with help she might become a really good singer. What she needed was musicianship and culture, more specifically a chilling blast of intellect—so helpful at her age to her kind of softness—and in coming to the Middle West, out of sentimental devotion to her dead mother, whom she was beginning to canonise, she had come to the least likely place. She would have got better training in New York, at the Juilliard, but then it was New York that she had to get away from. Next year, if she was lucky, Gaby's influence would send her to Paris, where she would get, of course, a much better education than was possible either in New York or Trimble. Merely to be in Paris was a preparation for the arts, at her age. Later on it had to be avoided, but at twenty it could start seeds that might wither or eccentricify anywhere else. Even now, when it was no longer what it used to be.

She was interested in Dolores, and yet she barely listened while Dolores and Gaby debated the very question on which she had clear views and the benefit of experience.

"But it's so expensive to live there. Everybody says so," Dolores said.

"I know places where you could live for one half, no, one ssird of what you spend here," Gaby said.

"But my French is so——"

"You have a good accent. Sometimes I wish you had given less of sse time to accent and more of sse time to verbs."

"When you sing a French song your accent has to be perfect. That's the first thing I learned from——"

"In one monss, I promise you, you would speak——"

Listening to them made Augusta recall the last time she saw Paris, which had been the same day she met Jack. She

had left Paris in the morning and taken a boat-train to Dieppe. The Channel was milky green and flat as a flounder, the crossing longer than the others further north, and Jack the only man on the boat who looked as if he might be interesting to talk to. Fortunately, he had taken a chair next to hers and started talking to her. She was astonished to find that he talked so well, that his good looks had not prevented the development of a good mind. *That* must mean an extraordinary amount of character. The book in his lap was about Indian architecture. Also, he was immediately interested in her as a woman, and asked her intimate questions that might have been offensive but weren't. And she liked the way he laughed at one of her favourite stories: how her Cockney cook, tripping and falling downstairs and thinking her end had come, had solemnly and cheerfully called out, "Good-bye, all!" That story was a good test, especially for a man who looked so dignified, and he passed it with a humanity that made her willing to answer, or at least parry, his questions. He said nothing about himself. There was no boring male ego to pacify.

They walked the deck together, had a bite together, and didn't exchange their names until just as they were coming into Newhaven, which had then seemed to bustle and now, in retrospect, seemed to dream. Both of them were met at the boat by distinguished-looking friends with houses in the South of England, which was why they had come to Newhaven. Just before her friends arrived, he tipped his hat discreetly, and she never expected to see him again.

The next Monday morning, as soon as he got to London, though no sooner than she hoped, he rang her up, and she had lunch with him. She had thought of it as a flirtation, perhaps the beginning of an affair, but at the end of an afternoon spent walking, bench-sitting, and 'galleryvanting', as he called it, she found herself thinking, though the word had not been mentioned, of marriage. By this time she knew who he was—she had found out, quietly, in a reference book, during the week-end—and she also had a very clear impression that she wanted him as her man. Godfrey's

impotence or coldness or both had unsettled her, but the two affairs she had had—the first with a brutal, strong-fisted sculptor who laughed at everything and liked to mutter 'dirty words while he made love to her; the second with a young, clever, but strangely repulsive Minister in His Majesty's Government—had been grave disappointments that almost led her to seek the consolations of Rome. Perhaps if the famous Father Bartell had been less worldly she might have become a Catholic, in which case she would never have made her last trip to Paris, where she went not only to hang an exhibition but to think out her religious problems, and would never have met Jack. But Father Bartell, in a more shocking way, had been as disappointing as her lovers, and now she was quite willing to admit that for her at least the first step on the way to heaven was a satisfactory man. Jack's eager, critical experimentalism seemed to her more truly religious than Father Bartell's complacent Thomism, which even when it had the right answers lacked the experience to make them real; and Jack had finally arrived at a genuine freedom from self that was more reliable than the mechanical humility of the priest. She had thrown off the *mystique* of celibacy, but only because she had met fleshliness that had matured into genuine love: which was the ideal, after all, of every artist.

Jack was chock-full of faults, but he had a habit of self-criticism that usually prevented him from making the same mistake twice. What surprised her most in him was his tentative desire to return to his home town in Ohio, for this coincided with a desire of her own, which she had felt first during the war, when the poor behaviour of American soldiers off duty and the wonderful behaviour of American soldiers on duty had reminded her of her own soil and of her need for re-rooting. For a long time her homeland had merely been a sentimental Fenimore Cooper remembrance—how uniformly Europeans responded to the magic word Kentucky!—but now it became real. Now she had had time to be aware of Godfrey's profound sterility and of her own need to break away from it, if her painting were ever to



become really good. Jack did not pretend to know anything about painting, but when he had looked at it for a while he often came up with a quite keen remark; while Godfrey knew just enough about it to know nothing. And of course, as a museum director, forced to look at it every day, discuss it every day, write about it, think about it, dream about it, Godfrey hated it with an intensity that her own work, no matter how carefully he guarded his language, had not entirely escaped. Poor dear! How he suffered, how he loathed his job! And how he revelled in it! In all the substitute satisfactions, all the honours that make a keeper and curator refrain at the last moment from leaping into a glorious bonfire of Blakes, El Grecos, Delacroix, Cezannes, Matisses, and shouting out how hideous they are.

And Godfrey had hated her for being a painter, for driving one more nail in his cross.

It was his hatred, plus Jack's refusal to coax, that made up her mind. "Perhaps Europe was merely part of your education," Jack said, "the way it was with me. Perhaps you're ready now to strike out on your own. I don't know enough about you to say, and I certainly don't know enough about painting. That's something you will know, and only you." A few days of that kind of talk, a chance to begin to see what he was like, and she was his. When the time came to make love he used blitz tactics that left her no alternative. She fell like an ardent plum, and he ate her up, and she knew the rest was something that could be worked out by lawyers.

"... In one monss you would know how to order dinner, in three monss you would know how to shop, and in six monss you would know how to give instructions to sse plumber," Gaby was saying, "just in case sse *bidet* didn't work any more."

"Do you really think so?" Dolores asked. "And it's actually cheaper to live there?"

There was another resounding knock on the front door. Augusta looked out of a kitchen window and saw the stout man from Washington who had come to keep an appointment with Jack that she had completely forgotten.

She wanted to cry! to protest! She couldn't cope with any more so early in the morning. It was just too much! What did they all expect of her? Back in London everything had been so simple, so regular, so uneventful. Even in the air raids. Now she simply couldn't cope.

"Is someone at the door," Gaby announced. "Do you wish me to go?"

"I'll go," said Augusta.

27

FORTUNATELY the name of the man from Washington came to her just before it was necessary to greet him. Her natural tendency was to be sloppy about names, to misspell them, to put all her energy jealously into painting and to see all human beings as visual objects, but her Southern belle training and her years as a London hostess had made social discipline automatic—sometimes she worried about this virtue and wondered if it would prevent her from being a really good painter—and so at the last moment she was always, or nearly always, able to hide her emotions and greet visitors irreproachably. Jack said Anglo-Saxon artists rarely came off because they first had to be good citizens.

"Dr. Pomeroy!" she cried. "This is a pleasure. I'll go and get the great man."

"Good morning, ma'am," said Dr. Pomeroy, falling into her Southern rhythm without difficulty. "You're certainly looking mighty well."

"Thank you. Isn't it a glorious morning." Repetition of a folk ritual had already made her feel better. "You remember Miss Bouchard, don't you? And Miss Martinez? Gaby, dear, do you mind going upstairs and telling Mr. Trimble that Dr. Pom——" She saw Jack, who must have remembered his engagement when he heard the knocker, coming downstairs. "There you are, dear. Dr. Pomeroy has come to see you and he's right on the dot. Are you always so punctual, Dr. Pomeroy?"

"I hope I'm not too early, ma'am, but the Ambassador did say——"

"I did indeed," said Jack, and a mere glance at him reassured her. He was always at his best when confronted by a specific problem. The colour had flown back into his cheeks, and she felt more confidence in his ability to handle the many problems crowding in upon him.

It was only when Jack had taken Dr. Pomeroy upstairs to his study with him and she had returned to the kitchen with the girls that she realised clearly what this latest visitor meant. A decision of the greatest importance to her life was going to be made, and she had *nothing to say*. It was as if she were a prisoner on trial and the jury had retired to reach a verdict. Two men were going to talk upstairs, and upon what they said depended her future.

Shouldn't she run up and tell them what *she* wanted?

What *did* she want?

To stay in Trimble?

Why stay in Trimble?

If she went upstairs and intimated to Jack that she wanted him to change his mind, that she wanted him to accept Dr. Pomeroy's offer, everything would be simple. They would go away, and all the horrible problems created by their presence in this unfortunate town—which still felt alien to her—would be solved. They would go away, moreover, in style, with elegance, with honours, with applause.

If they stayed, they would surely encounter one new enmity after another.

Why cling to Trimble? The framer made almost wilful mistakes in his measurements, the cobbler didn't know how to cobble but merely to nail on factory-made soles and heels, the nursing had been terrible during her miscarriage, the gloominess of a manufacturing town was depressing, and there was little of the old-fashioned, front porch friendliness that she remembered from Kentucky. Even her own home town had seemed strange to her during a motor trip. Had something awful happened to America, as many people believed, had its new power made it unliveable, had

mechanical prowess dehumanised its people, or, was she merely suffering from the disillusionment that came inescapably in the second half of life? Had her English images of her homeland been mere childish self-deception?

No, there were many good things in it that she loved, that anyone would love. It was beautiful, and its people were on the whole good. And compared with other lands, it had many well-known advantages.

She had long since got used to stupid jokes about modern art from people who would not be similarly boastful of their ignorance of modern science. The provincialism she had encountered in Trimble, and the loneliness it brought with it, were states of mind after all—and preferable on the whole to the metropolitan brilliance and the professional comradeship that she had forfeited by building her nest in a province.

"When a man is tired of London he is tired of life," Dr. Johnson had said, and it had a crusty Tory soundness about it.

It was also true of Trimble.

And the answer to her questions was already beginning to kick inside her, or at least she thought she had felt a tiny boot from it the night before.

She was going to stay in Trimble, of course, no matter what Hank or Brent or anyone else thought up to dislodge her. It was the only way she could be sure of having her baby.

And it was also good for her painting.

So . . . she was going to stay, and nobody was going to force her out.

Also, she loved her house. She had done it over herself, almost rebuilt it, and she was going to enjoy it now.

That was the answer to Hank and Brent, and it was perfectly all right with her that Jack was upstairs at the moment refusing Dr. Pomeroy's offer. In fact she would have overruled him if he had wanted to accept it.

There had been no point in raising a question to which she already knew the answer. Only nervousness had made her think out again a problem that she had long since thought out before.

The months ahead would be terrible, but she now felt that she could see them through. She had felt the same way exactly ten years before, in October 1940, when she had also known that she would be able to see through the Nazi bombing of London. In fact, it was just about then, or perhaps even in September, during the worst of it, that she had felt sure the Nazis would never win. Others had felt it too.

And now she was up against a new enemy, and she was beginning to believe that he too could be beaten.

Suddenly she thought of the Middle East, of the trip there that she and Jack were sacrificing by not accepting Dr. Pomeroy's offer. She might never go there now, she might never see Cairo or Jerusalem or Tehran or Bombay or even Casablanca and Algiers. If Jack turned down this offer, the chances of another diplomatic assignment were slight. Suddenly she sighed for the exotic travel that she was giving up, perhaps for ever. She felt condemned to a lifetime of Mid-western dullness.

"Tell me about Algiers," she said to Gaby.

"Algiers?" Gaby asked with surprise.

"Yes. What's it like? Is it beautiful? Are the mosques really as beautiful as they're said to be, so simple, so stark, so white?"

"Algiers is dirty," said Gaby. "They call it Algiers sse White, but actually it's a very dirty place."

JACK did not regret Dr. Pomeroy's visit. Not only did it give him a situation to cope with, not only did it tune him up for further action, it tested his reasons for isolating himself in Ohio, it offered an intellectual duel on first principles. This drudge would never understand why he had left the Foreign Service, why he thought the United States would be better served now by scattered individuals than by its official representatives, but even so it might be fun to spar with him.

And Jack knew in advance that he was not going to refuse

Dr. Pomeroy's offer out of hand. If war had not been declared openly by Hank, he might have done so. Now, however, it would pay to hold on to every bargaining point as long as possible. He was going to listen to Dr. Pomeroy's offer, and then he was going to hedge. It was the percentage way to play the game at this point. Any other way would have been amateurish, emotional.

"I was fascinated by our conversation last night, sir," Dr. Pomeroy had accepted a seat in his reading-chair but refused a cigarette. "I only wish we could have gone on with it. But isn't it possible to set too high a price on one's intellectual integrity? If we turn into yogis, won't we have no one but ourselves to blame if the commissars take over? And I mean, sir, take over. And not only in Russia but here. And not the Russian type of commissar, but our own home-grown, grass-roots, red-herring kind."

"That's always the danger," Jack conceded from behind his wide, flat oak desk, which Augusta had designed and he had built. He knew the danger personally; he had already experienced it that morning. "But don't you think the intellectual makes a better contribution to politics by ideas and moral influence than by direct action?"

"No, sir, I don't! Some bunglers of course will help their own cause best by staying as far away from politics as possible, but you are not that kind. You have at least two strings to your bow, and we need one of them—badly."

"Don't you think an aggressive, uncomplicated type of man always runs the show? That the mere capacity to see two sides to a question disqualifies one for effective political action?"

"No, sir! You yourself have disproved that. But many others have done it too. As humanity is faced with more complicated political challenges, she will respond to them with more complicated political leaders."

"What about the capacity to get outside oneself, to see oneself with humility and detachment? Surely a good intellectual should have that, but won't it cost him the demonic

power that is necessary to catch men's imagination, to get votes?"

"No, sir! The demagogue is on his way out. He's not equal to modern conditions. His place will be taken by a new kind of leader whom we will produce for our new needs. Slowly, painfully, but——"

"Education will do it?"

"Yes, sir! But meanwhile lots of hard work!"

Jack saw no reason to continue the discussion. He knew in advance what Dr. Pomeroy's answers would be, and he had no wish to dispute them. He had gone through enough of this kind of discussion before resigning from office. Such a man would never understand him. He merely smiled and said, "So it all adds up to this: a man like me should be in politics?"

"A man like you most certainly."

"Well, now! Tell me what I ought to do!"

Dr. Pomeroy described the offer he had been authorised to make and the work it involved, but Jack did not listen closely. He knew already what the work involved, and he also knew certain difficulties that Dr. Pomeroy either did not mention or treated very lightly.

More interesting than the offer was Dr. Pomeroy himself. and Jack found himself making covert 'psychopolitical' notes about his guest. He had read Dr. Pomeroy's latest book, an earnest plea for Point Four as the best way the United States could rally the undeveloped nations of the world, especially in Asia, to her side in any coming showdown with the Soviet Union. Our money should not be put into armament, Dr. Pomeroy argued, but into the development of a worldwide T.V.A. that would protect the poor and ignorant peoples of the world for ever from hunger and child-bed fever and war. Thus we would prevent the Russians from stealing technology's propagandistic appeal from us, but more important, we would be doing what we *ought* to do, what both enlightened self-interest and common humanity demanded of us. In short he was a well-known type of liberal who, until he understood himself better, and

restrained his generosity with other men's money and other men's time, until he faced the natural, climatic, historic, psychological barriers to world-wide industrialisation, would be merely one more unheeded, foundation-backed pulpiteer who talked of irrigation ditches instead of resurrection and could rouse a woman's club to fever pitch. He was the kind of liberal who from self-ignorance was doing everything possible to pave the way for subsequent reactionaries. His politics were a voluptuous flight from himself, and he would be shocked if someone were to tell him that his splendid-sounding appeal to Americans to become 'citizens of the world' was actually blowing up a wave of isolationist resentment on which Hank, to look no farther, was riding into office. He expected much of others, little of himself.

One thing he said interested Jack very much. He referred in passing to the graduate students he had begun to teach recently at a school of international studies in Washington.

"Is that the one where Bill Carter is president?" The telephone rang, but he was too much interested to answer it; he wanted to hear more of the school that had offered him a job that he might have to take some day.

"Why, yes. Yes indeed, sir. Dr. Carter is our president. I don't know him very well because I've just begun to—— Is he a friend of yours?"

"Oh yes. We both resigned from the Foreign Service at the same time. Felt pretty much the same about senatorial interference."

"Well!"

Gaby knocked, to tell Jack that the phone call was for him.

Jack took his time about answering it. It was unlikely that he would have a chance to talk to Dr. Pomeroy later in the day, and he wanted to make one point clear, even if his visitor missed it entirely. "Do you really think," he asked, "that I would accomplish more by going overseas, and having my hands tied in practically everything I wanted to do, than if I were to stay here and try to think out some of our political problems? Assuming, of course, that I'm a



purely political animal and have no obligations except to my country."

Dr. Pomeroy had been trying to answer him before he finished. "Of course you would, sir! You're needed overseas. Badly!"

"Then this is not a time to keep silence? Our big job is not to re-think our problems, even for those of us who want to think and may some day learn to think?"

"Couldn't you do both, think and do a practical job—at the same time?"

"That's the question!" said Jack with a smile. "Excuse me. I'm wanted on the phone."

He left the room with unexpected respect for Dr. Pomeroy.

29

IT was Dena. "I'm glad I caught you. Maybe you won't want to come here now. Danny just called. Thornton has flown the coop. I mean, they've rushed him out of town. He was put on the early train for Cincinnati before I even spoke to you." She spoke crisply, concisely. Her journalistic years enabled her to give a clear, quick report. He felt as if he were back in a well-run embassy and listening to a first-rate secretary.

"They rushed him out of town? Why?"

"Last night when he left your place he didn't go back to the hotel. He went to Half Moon Street."

"I see." She was referring to the red-light district of Trimble, so small and yet so eventful.

"Trust him! He must have gotten into an argument with a sailor. I don't know, some kind of trouble. It wasn't very serious. There wouldn't even have been an arrest. But when they heard about it in the Sheriff's office they got in touch with you know who and——"

"No. Who?"

"Your boy."

"Oh. So?"

"And your boy told them to use it as an excuse to get

Mr. Thornton out of town. Pretty smart. He's served his purpose anyway. So they slipped the journal back into his luggage, and persuaded him it would be a good thing to leave town right away. I guess he was a little scared. Ask Danny about the details. Anyway they checked him out of the hotel and put him on that six-fifty train, and a deputy went along with him to Cincinnati, to make sure he got on the morning train for New York."

"Hmm."

"Now there isn't any Mr. Thornton around these parts, and you won't be able to talk to him. I thought maybe you could get a statement from him that would help you. Maybe it wouldn't have helped. But that was my idea."

"Hmm."

"Do you still want to come over? I'd still like to talk the whole thing over with you. And I'd *love* to see the journal."

"Later, perhaps. I'm going to have a lot to do. This changes things. I'll call you. But I want you to know how much I appreciate——"

"Oh, I haven't done anything."

"Yes, you have."

On the whole, as he hung up, he was glad he was not seeing Dena. She was certainly clever, but he would have to do his own thinking and his own acting. It had been foolish ever to imagine that help could come from the outside. The next step was to confront Hank. On that he had already decided. Last night the boy had said something about just spending the day at home and resting up, until it was time to go to the football game in the afternoon.

The best thing would be to drop in on him unannounced. He really wasn't as formidable as Augusta and everyone else seemed to imagine.

He didn't bother to tell Augusta what Dena had said to him on the telephone, or what he was going to do. She didn't understand such things very well, and from now on he was going to have to make his own decisions and carry them out. He merely looked in on her and the others—they were still eating a leisurely breakfast in the kitchen, which

was large and farmerish—and announced that he was going to town.

Dr. Pomeroy had been telling Gaby something about India. "If they would just get over a few silly superstitions, they could have the largest beef-packing industry in the world. Oh, I tell you! Big things are in store for Asia."

"Where are you going?" Augusta asked Jack.

"To town."

"Oh." She seemed satisfied.

The important thing to remember about Hank was that he was a politician. All politicians were power-crazy, as Jack had had plenty of opportunity to see with his own eyes, and this meant concretely that they always cut a corner somewhere, did something that wouldn't look at all well in print. Even when they were 'honest'. Also they were all sleight-of-hand experts and knew how to take the eye of the public away from their real manoeuvres, but an experienced observer could find out their weak spot in time. Newspapermen were justified in their traditional mistrust of them. The trouble was the shortness of time. The election was just about half a month away. The chances were he would never have enough time to get clear-cut evidence that he could use against Hank.

Now, however, he had to start looking.

When the boy was five or six years old he had lied about spilling some black ink on a valuable letter-case of red morocco leather. "I didn't do it, Daddy, honest, I didn't."

Jack had pretended to swallow the lie. "Of course you didn't. Kitty must have done it."

"That's right, Kitty did it."

Alix had smiled approvingly at Jack. She had feared he would be too stern with her little boy. She had reached out her hand to squeeze Jack's affectionately, but Jack had moved his away. That must have been the time when he was slipping off to see Barbara in her apartment. He was just beginning to realise how fragrant, how satisfying a woman could be. He was still in his twenties then, and his son was afraid of him.

His car was slow to warm up. He'd better put some anti-freeze in the radiator. As he backed the car out of the red barn he saw the hole in the shingle roof where the wounded raccoon had gone to die.

There had been a time when his son was afraid of him.

THE trip to town, like all his trips to town, was an encounter with his unwritten biography. He passed the streets where he had had a peripatetic fist-fight, moving four blocks, with a crowd following, after school hours, on his way to his new home in a poor section, and his antagonist was a boy a year older, now a smiling druggist, who had called him a Chink because of his mother's religion. He passed the public library where he had first read, at sixteen, of the Edinburgh school of geology of James Hutton in a book by Sir Archibald Geikie; where he had also first read *The Old Red Sandstone* by Hugh Miller; where he had begun to dream of his chosen science. He passed the high school where he had won three scholarships and had to choose among them. He passed the town clay tennis-courts, donated by his father when Trimble had only 5,000 people, where he had learned the game before he was invited to play in the tournament on the grass courts at the country club, which his family could no longer afford to belong to, and won the junior singles. He passed the old home of the first girl he had ever kissed, when he brought her back from a hayride given by the freshman class at high school.

There was nothing peaceful or nostalgic about any of his personal landmarks. Privately they all bore battle markers, and he might have been driving through a particularly well-plaqued section of Virginia or Massachusetts and witnessing the stages of his own Revolution. Here was the large family house, copied from a turreted, red-brick Italian castle, where his mother had been reinstalled as soon as Spence and Brent could afford it. He had taken Alix there, and his mother had approved of her. Now it was an orphanage and, since

the day was Saturday, some children played in swings in a pebbly yard. A few years later he had taken Barbara there, and his mother had decidedly not approved of her. But then, determined to break entirely free of his mother's influence, he had found it one more point in Barbara's favour. A half-mile away lay the rock quarry where he had begun to sharpen his powers of geologic observation. A little nearer was the old home of Marge Nelson, the banker's daughter, who had first snubbed Brent and later married him. Her younger sister Ginny had been furious with Jack when he had taken her to a high school dance by trolley. "I've never gone out with a boy who didn't have his own car," she had said, and he had taken it as a justified reproof.

He had been so much part of Trimble that he had never questioned its values until some years after they had delivered him into his marriage with Alix. How he had gloated over his scholastic horrors, his tennis cups, his well-born bride, his high salary, while he faithfully, in accordance with the code of his class, failed to mention them or, when they had been mentioned, found fault with them! It wasn't until after his mistaken, sinful, painful marriage to Alix that he began to see some of the social forces that had shaped him. Thank God for that stupidity! From that time on his life had been troubled and adventurous, miserable and exciting. He had nibbled the fruit of the forbidden international tree. His sexual quest had started a political quest, and his political quest had ultimately driven him toward philosophy of a kind. Barbara had been followed by the soulful, broad-beamed Russian beauties introduced to him by his friend Kolya, the secret police official whom he liked so much, who sang gypsy songs so well, who told such uproarious stories, who knew so many attractive girls, and who disappeared so suddenly. Jack's intellectual objections to Marxism had amused him as 'an engineer's naïveté', not to be taken seriously, and yet it was the realism about people that Jack had learned as a disinherited child in Trimble, his bitter insight into their proneness to evil, that had saved him from being fooled by the wretchedly inadequate psychology that

was the Achilles heel of Marxism. The Russian girls had eased his political education while they opened his eyes to the blind hopefulness to be expected after all of recently modernised peasants who had been given a new dogma that relieved them of any doubts. He had been glad to get away after a while, back to European women who were not only cleaner but less docile and less enthusiastic about the future. But when he returned to his own country he found that he wanted solitude to digest his experiences, and so, as soon as his new business activities permitted, and his second marriage was dissolved, he had formed the habit of withdrawal into a quiet place, alone, that finally led him to New Mexico.

Every trip to Trimble was the same: it started a chain of memories that led to a sharply critical review of his whole life. And now, of course, his home town was full of associations with the latest snubs he had received there, when he had lost his place at the college and begun to be regarded as a has-been or quite possibly a never-was. He had only to pass near the college elms, taller than any others in town, to realise again how low his stock had fallen. And on this particular trip he was carrying the knowledge that it was being sold short by a master rigger of markets.

With this comforting reflection he arrived at his destination.

Hank's home had been carefully chosen. It was a block from a gas-house, two doors from a steam laundry, next door to an ice-plant. It had been found by a man in Brent's office and approved by Hank because, better than anything else he had seen, "It takes the stink of Choate and Princeton out of me. Not to mention Vanderbilt and Trimble."

Behind its drab cream clapboard front and beneath its pebbly green 'composition' roof his wife Shirley—who had been as carefully chosen from a lower social level than his own—did all the housework and cooking, even now when she was expecting a second child. "After I'm elected to the House we'll move out of this dump," he was reliably reported to have promised her, but his father doubted it, and she was thought to doubt it also. Above the House

was the Senate, and above that still higher offices, the best in the gift of the people. And he might get the idea that he would lose his luck if he lived comfortably. Certain remarks he had already dropped gave that impression. "I don't just want to win," he said. "This is a crusade."

His modest second-hand Chevrolet was not in its galvanised iron garage, and Jack, to his own surprise, was glad. If Hank had gone out, as seemed likely, he would have a chance to talk to Shirley. He liked her, and also it was easy to draw her out. She would never say anything disloyal about Hank, of course; she was as staunchly uncomplaining as the horse that her father still drove now and then from his farm to the Presbyterian Church (and tethered to a black weight that he carried in his buggy); but her unhappiness did make itself known in little remarks that at times were extremely revealing. She felt at home with Jack, and when her household duties permitted had attended some of his lectures. She had helped him to understand his son better, as much by her silences as by her revelations. When he had once said, "I suppose you and Hank discussed this house a long time before you took it," her quick change of subject made him realise that Hank had neither sought her opinion nor heeded it.

No one answered the door. He tried it. It opened. He went inside and called "Shirley!" but no one answered. He felt regret: that he was not going to see little Jean. He was fond of his granddaughter, aged two, and regretted that his difficulties with his son had prevented him from seeing more of her.

Cautiously he went through the modest, quickly-built, thin-doored house to make sure that no one was there. He looked down the cellar, into a closet where brooms and mops were kept, into the only bathroom.

No one *was* there. He had been given an unexpected opportunity. There wasn't likely to be much time before Hank and Shirley came back, but if he acted fast he might come up with an idea for a counter-attack.

He went at once to a small room off the living-room which

served Hank as an office at home. If any ideas were to be found, that was the place to look for them.

It contained a desk, and above it three small photographs in uniform black frames hanging on gilt pins against an apple-green wall. Even these innocuous displays of affection might start a trail of thought that would lead to a political weak spot, for everyone was vulnerable now, in the new wave of mutual suspicion and unconcealed malice that totalitarian winds had piled high enough to cross the Atlantic and break against formerly carefree shores; Americans were already imitating, more than they realised, their enemies, and Hank himself might be made a victim of the same epidemic of hate that he was helping to spread; but his father would surely find this kind of retaliation not only repugnant but impractical because he would never be able to pursue it. The untiring distortion required for any successful demagoguery was possible only to those so deep in despair that they were beyond any objective reference; and Jack lived in a daily world of strict objective reference, of scrupulous regard for truth that overmatched him hopelessly in any popular contest. Augusta was right: he should never seek to compete with Hank as a politician. And yet the hope persisted that if he looked hard enough, or thought hard enough, he could come up with a counter-attack.

The largest photograph was of Hank's mother Alix, taken a year earlier in California, where she now lived with her second husband, an avocado rancher who apparently enjoyed her cool impeccability. Time had imperialised the delicately Roman nose that in 1920, at the time of her wedding, had appeared in sepia prints on Sunday rotogravure pages, softened by veil and bouquet, as a promise of character in an otherwise demure girl of twenty. Now there was little to see in her face except character, unless it was a certain hard-fought pathos about the mouth. It was still an engaging face, however, and softer now that the hair was unashamedly greying. But the lips were thin and stubborn, a legacy from a somewhat scholarly father who had shared the passion of Henry Adams for medieval France, where he had found her



name, and had also passed on to her a disdain of the flesh that had caused the shipwreck of her first marriage and was possibly the ultimate source of the now-catastrophic resentments of her only child.

No ideas there. Alix would stay in California, and there was no way of involving her in a counter-attack on her son. She doted on Hank, but she had not recently given him any money to speak of. Money was probably his political weak spot; he was much richer than he pretended to be; but there was no way of connecting her with the wealth that he was hiding from the eyes of the voters.

The next portrait was of Jean, taken when she was about a year and a half old. Two large, eager, dark-blue eyes dominated it; eyes that had caused everyone to say, as soon as she was born, that she favoured her grandfather. Her face, however, now looked terrified. It was while he studied this picture, and Shirley's, which hung beside it, that Jack began to have an idea. Both of them were obviously unhappy with Hank. Both would never say anything against him, Jean because she couldn't talk yet, Shirley because she was entirely loyal to him; but some way might still be found to employ their unhappiness against him. No sooner had he had this idea, however, than he knew he could never do anything with it. It was common gossip in the family and in the town, especially around the college, that Hank *used* them in an unpleasantly political way, brought them to public meetings whenever possible, posed with them in newspaper photographs, took them frequently with him to Columbus, but of course nothing could be done with any of that--or at least nothing could be done by Jack. He felt, in fact, ashamed of himself for even having the idea.

Looking at the handsome, patient, uncomplaining face of Shirley, with its hair parted severely in the middle, its serene full lips and its bland maternal eyes directly facing the camera, its frank resemblance to the pioneer women she descended from, Jack knew again he would have a hard time finding any strategy that would satisfy both his conscience and his need for self-defence. And the reason was

probably concealed in another, and larger, photograph, on another wall: of the victory celebration that had ended Hank's only previous election campaign. There was a remarkable absence of the usual cheering in that record of an obscure provincial ceremony; the men and women surrounding the successful candidate for the Legislature looked relatively serious, as if they *believed* in him, as if he had caught their imagination. And he—not wearing the usual dinner jacket, but his oldest, mussiest clothes—looked as if he too *believed* in what he was doing.

Here was the trait in Hank that Jack realised he had not been facing: his seriousness. He couldn't face it because he didn't believe in it. He couldn't accept his son's political ambitions as anything more than a particularly dangerous manifestation of psychopathology. Could it be that he was mistaken, that he was doing Hank a terrible injustice?

The boy had brains. One of the leading Wall Street law firms had offered him a job. His war record had been excellent. And now he was sacrificing the comforts of a pre-cooked New York career, burying himself in an obscure provincial town, and learning how to get control of democratic power. Could mere ambition have dictated such austerity of residence, of home life, of long-term planning? For that matter, could any politician be judged fairly by ordinary psychological or ethical standards? Didn't statecraft, and especially modern statecraft, call for distortions of character and behaviour—though individually no more reprehensible than those found among artists—that might disturb a captious intellectual but were nonetheless essential to practical, day-to-day, crisis-ridden government? Didn't the very nature of his craft require a politician to be as ruthless, and if need be as bloody, as a surgeon? More specifically, who would have made the United States aware of a real Communist plot if it had not been for crude, sick, dangerous Red-baiters like Hank?

Merely to entertain such questions made Jack realise, despairingly, how inadequate he had become to his present search. He had come here to mount an attack, an attack

against an enemy who had injured him importantly and lastingly, and now he was finding excuses for him! Augusta was right. Too many books, too many books. He was a fighter who had lost his punch.

There was a noise at the front of the house. He quickly slipped out of the 'office' and returned to the living-room. He didn't want to seem to be snooping.

NO one was coming. The noise must have come from outdoors. He could go on with his snooping.

In the living-room, where it could be seen by everyone, hung another photograph—of one of America's greatest admirals, whom Hank had served as an aide during the war—and it was signed Very Cordially. It reminded Jack of the memorable confession the boy had made to him about two years before, at the country club, shortly after his arrival in Trimble, when he was still trying to get close to him. They had been playing tennis, and Hank had been impressed by his father's ability to come from behind and beat him in the third and deciding set 7-5.

They were changing their clothes in the locker-room, which was deserted save for them. A September afternoon sun peeked through a low window at small, dark-green steel closets, and the air reeked mildly of sweat. Jack was putting mercurochrome on a foot blister that had broken. He had been talking of some of the feuds he had encountered in the Army, and had reminded Hank of something. Also, the boy seemed to want to get it off his chest, as if it had been burdening him for a long time. Even so, he spoke with the caution of a new-made lawyer.

"When I was crossing the Pacific, soon after I got my commission, there was a very tough little seaman—came from not far from here, too—who took it into his mind to try and scare me. Made it very clear right from the start what he thought of college boys who got commissions after a little training and just walked into the best jobs in the

Navy. He always managed to be talking to some buddy of his where I could overhear them. They had some painting to do, I think it was. 'Oh, you know them guys,' he used to say, 'they never done nothin' their whole lives, they're still in pantywaists, but all of a sudden they're givin' you orders, see. We had one of 'em aboard the last time we come out this way, and then there was this big storm, see, and what do you know! Young Mr. Pantywaist, when this here storm was over, nobody could find him! He must have been washed overboard. You know, "lost at sea".'

"And then he'd laugh like hell. He let me have that twice. He was doing his best to scare me.

"And then there really was a storm at sea. And what do you know! One of our seamen was missing. They never did know what happened to him. So they just reported he was lost at sea. I used to catch his buddy staring at me after that. And I stared right back at him."

Jack had listened to the story in silence. He had not wished to interrupt the confidence. They had been closer then than they had ever been, and he had wanted Hank's friendship badly.

Now he wished, as he walked back into Hank's office, that he had asked some questions. He might have got a scrap of information that could be used in the election campaign.

Actually, if he wished to pursue the matter through some discreet friends in Washington, it would not be difficult to check up on the story, discover the name of the ship, the seaman, and so forth, and if there were any truth in it—and he had no doubt there was—enough evidence might be uncovered to turn over to the government. Similar cases had appeared from time to time in the newspapers, as an aftermath of the war, and of course if there were any evidence at all, it would wreck Hank's political career.

Which *should* be wrecked.

And the retaliation would be entirely justified.

All that was needed was a trip to Washington.

But first an ultimatum to Hank: either he withdraws from the election or I'll force him to.

No, don't tip your hand. Go to Washington first, find out if you *have* a case, and if you do, let them have it. Both barrels.

All the time, as his mind raced ahead to Washington—whom he would see there, how he would get the evidence most quickly and most certainly—he knew he would never go there. If politics called for that kind of action, he simply wasn't capable of it. He had never been capable of it. Until now he had always been in a fortunate position where success did not require anything contemptible of him. Until now he had merely had to work hard and keep his wits about him. And he couldn't change. His evolution into intellectual had been eased by the fact that as geologist, businessman, soldier, and diplomat he had never been required to do anything that he considered dishonourable. Or at least not dishonourable by his standards at the time. And so a pattern of behaviour had been established that he couldn't change now. Even if his incapacity meant his destruction, he couldn't change now.

He had walked back into Hank's office. And for the first time he noticed what he should have noticed before.

There was a *lock* on the closet door. A round brass lock such as must have been specially installed. There must be something valuable in the closet. Or perhaps something that Hank did not wish to have seen.

The door was locked. He tried it. He tried it several times. It wouldn't budge. He tried inserting a metal letter-opener, which he took from Hank's desk, between the lock and the door. Sometimes that would slip open such a lock. This time it didn't.

Then he had another idea that came to him because of recent carpentry experience. He would take the door, if possible, off its hinges. He had no tools with him; a screw-driver would have come in handy; but the letter-opener was almost as good; and after less than a minute, to his delight, he had opened the door without touching its lock.

The closet was full of papers. On top of a grey steel filing-cabinet lay a cheque-book. No, two cheque-books.

At last there was a chance to look into Hank's finances. And it didn't seem at all wrong to do it.

ONE cheque-book bore the mark of the chief local bank named after the family and dominated by Brent, and, as Jack expected, its balance was modest. Since deposits were among the first items of gossip in Trimble, Hank had known how to avoid attention on such an important point. The other cheque-book, however, bore the embossed starry shield of the Guaranty Trust Company of New York, and it might give a truer indication of Hank's actual resources.

It was crammed with papers. Letters from a brokerage firm and two bank statements, in addition to some correspondence about a small office building in Columbus, had been stuffed bulkily between the pages of the cheque-book, as if there had been little time, during the campaign, to make entries or check figures. A few facts became almost immediately apparent, however, and they were enough to let Jack know that he was not only looking at buried treasure, he had found the evidence he needed to force Hank's withdrawal from the election campaign or, if he persisted in it, to assure his defeat. Also, it was the kind of evidence that Jack need not scruple to use, that in fact, in view of Hank's pretensions of poverty, it was his civic duty to bring to the attention of the electorate. Furthermore, it might be the kind of evidence—his quick imagination began to believe—that could be used in such a way that his connection with it need never be known.

Evidently Hank liked to have fluid capital at his disposal. The latest statement from the bank showed a balance of \$33,385.27. An offer of \$60,000 had been made for the building in Columbus. And the deposits in the cheque-book showed that dividends had been paid on 180 shares of General Motors, 300 shares of American Tel and Tel, and

200 shares of Standard Oil of New Jersey—all gilt-edged securities that must be worth at least another \$60,000. And there seemed to be other stock dividends from less well-known companies.

There was much information in the cheque-book that should be studied at leisure. It and the bank statements were the best evidence he had found. The entries in the cheque-book were all in Hank's handwriting. But the cheque-book offered a problem; it was too large to put into any pocket of his clothing; it would have been too large also for an overcoat pocket; so he stuffed it down inside the front of his trousers, over his abdomen, and rumpled his sweater above it, that its flatness might appear less noticeable.

He decided not to look within the grey steel cabinet, exactly like his own, for any further information. This was enough. There would probably be savings bank-books, mortgages, stock purchases, and the like, but they would only tell more of the same story. This was surely enough.

He found himself smiling. Not only with triumph but at himself. Hank must have inherited his own secretiveness about money. He himself had also hidden away some money in New York, against a rainy day. His experiences with his first two wives had taught him never to reveal the true extent of his resources, and if Augusta had looked a little more closely, she too would have unearthed a buried treasure. He was glad to have it, now that hints were beginning to multiply that at the first sign of financial shakiness the campaign to drive him out of Trimble would not scruple to take his roof from over his head. That was why he liked pretending to Brent that he could afford only one bottle of Scotch, why he liked leading Augusta to believe that she couldn't put certain delicacies in her *paella*. His own pot of gold, however, was not nearly as large as Hank's; he had given the boy too much, out of a misguided sense of guilt; still, he would surely be able to hold on to the house and see Augusta safely through the delivery of her child.

It was disappointing, in a way, to learn that his suspicions about Hank were correct, that Hank was not the kind of politician who was immune to economic temptations. His rôle of disinterested conservative, devoted solely to the re-birth of values, had been so well played that his father, who should have known better, had begun to believe, or half-believe, him. What nonsense! And again part of the totalitarian mythology—that the new leaders had freed themselves selflessly, sometimes even ascetically, from all ordinary temptations—that was steadily gaining foothold in America, as our masses wanted bosses to do more and more of their thinking for them, and so demanded signs and marvels and miraculous personalities. The father of psychopolitics—and Hank—should have been the first to see through such dramaturgy. If psychopolitics meant anything, it meant clarity about the demonic possibilities beneath the traditional reasonableness of a democracy. When politicians spoke of ideas they should be most suspect.

On second thought Jack decided to look into the grey steel filing-cabinet, and was seeing if it was locked when he heard a child's voice. The voice was Jean's with its already troubled, already over-demanding note, and she was saying something unintelligible in the next room.

They had come back, and he had not heard them! He had thought he would surely hear their car in the driveway—or their steps on the porch. And now he had to put back the closet door! All his plans were in danger. Fortunately the door went on again easily, though not without a rather loud noise, as he fitted it back on to its hinges and slipped its pins into position.

Meanwhile Shirley was saying in the next room, "Come here, dear. Let Mama take off your coat."

Jean was saying, "No! No!"

Hank was saying, from further away, "You put it in the ice-box. I haven't got time. I've got to get back to my paper work."

Jack took the picture of Alix off the wall and walked out into the living-room with it in his hand. "Hello, hello,



hello!" he called out cheerfully. "When did you get this? I never saw it before. Shirley! How are you, my dear? Jean, give me a kiss."

"Why, Father!" Shirley exclaimed. "Have you been here long? Then it was your car. The place is a mess. I didn't have ti——"

"No, not long. Jean, come here, dear. Come here, dear."

Jean never came readily. Already she looked terrified by a much too brutal world.

Hank ran out of the kitchen. "Who's there?" he cried out in alarm, and he had a look of extraordinary terror and extraordinary determination. His face might have belonged to an ever-alert jailer. "Oh, Dad!" He looked at his father suspiciously. "What are you doing here?"

"I came to pay a call on you, young man." Jack's voice was divided between friendliness toward his daughter-in-law and sternness toward his son. At the same time he realised that he could not sit down; the cheque-book would show. "Shirley, will you excuse us?" He moved towards the porch. "I have something important to discuss with Hank." He put down the picture of Alix. "It's good. She looks well."

"Why, of course, Father," Shirley said instantly and obediently. "Come along, dear," she called to Jean, and held out a hand to take her to the kitchen.

"No, no," Jack said, "we can go outside."

Now Jean had come to him and taken his hand, as if he were relief from a monotonous terror, and wanted him to lift her up in the air. But he couldn't bend down.

"Later, dear," he said. "Granddad will come back later."

She looked disappointed. A moment later, while he ruthlessly ignored her, she began to whimper.

"Let's go outside" he said sternly to Hank. "I want to talk to you."

The child burst into tears.

AS soon as they were alone on the porch Jack came to the point. "This morning I found a raccoon trying to gnaw his way into the house. I don't know where my rifle is, so I called the police, and they sent out a sharpshooter from the Sheriff's office. He told me that during the night a diary was brought into the Sheriff's office—a diary that had been taken out of a hotel room by a hotel detective. The diary belonged to Cairo Thornton, but you wanted it photostatted, this man said, and so they spent the night photostating it."

"I wanted it photostatted?" Already it was clear that Hank would lie—with the curious combination of legalism and pathology that made him so dangerous.

"Yes, you. And also, this man said, *you* were already spreading the report that merely because Cairo Thornton was a guest in my home last night——"

"Then you admit he was a guest in your home last night?" Hank took up the unimportant point as if everything hinged on it.

"Of course he was. You saw him there yourself!"

"Yesterday was the day he arrived in town, wasn't it?"

"I don't know. Yes, I think it was. Anyway, it doesn't matter. And don't act as if I were a witness on the stand!"

"It may be important."

"It isn't! What is important is that this deputy sheriff——" Jack didn't mind directing Hank's later fury toward the unpleasant hunter, and turning it away from Danny "—said *you* started the rumour that there was some sexual relationship between myself and a man whom I never saw until yesterday."

"Who said that?"

"The deputy sheriff."

"What's his name?"

"I don't know. The point is that you have started a rumour about me—a rumour that is obviously untrue—and

you are circulating copies of the diary to establish guilt by association."

"Now wait a minute. Because you say you heard something from a man whose name you don't know, you barge in here and make an accusation against me?"

Jack leaned against the porch rail. It was almost impossible to cope with such dishonesty. "All right, let's not call it an accusation. Let's call it a question. Did you or did you not start such a rumour about me? Because it's already getting around town, and somebody started it."

"Of course I didn't start any rumour about you. I don't even know what you're talking about. I don't even know what the rumour is. What is it?"

"I'm convinced you do know. But the rumour is very simple. It's that this man Thornton is homosexual—there's proof of that in his diary—and that I must be homosexual too, because I entertained him in my home."

Hank hesitated. Then he smiled slightly. "Well, are you?"

"Am I what?"

"Are you a homosexualist?"

"Of course I'm not. You ought to know that. You owe your existence to the fact that I'm not."

"Oh, that doesn't mean anything. In my work I've run into many cases of that sort. Lots of men have had children and are still homosexuals. Children and wives. Even three wives."

"Now listen, young man, I don't allow people to talk to me like that." Jack's temper was rising, and he knew he should control it, and so he smiled, as if the issue were still a joke. Thus only, he believed, could he handle Hank's aggressive illness.

"You don't, eh? I thought you just told me it was already getting around town. Yet because you haven't the courage to face a few facts about yourself you barge in here and start putting the blame on me. Why don't you start putting the blame where it belongs? On yourself! That's the only way you'll ever get straightened out."

Jack wanted to hit him. Such perversion of truth demanded punishment. But he knew it would be a mistake. Also, Hank would beat him. The slim muscular waist beneath the morning fresh white shirt and the thin cowhide belt that was always proudly drawn tight, they were signs of youth and invincibility. He doubted whether he could still beat Hank even at tennis. And so he smiled again and spoke in a quite, reasonable tone. "I don't need to be straightened out. You're the one who needs——"

"You don't, eh? Well, I think you do. I think you ought to go away from here, especially if people are already talking about you, and spend a lot of time with a psychiatrist. I think you owe it to yourself and Augusta. I understand they are able to make some very remarkable cures nowadays, if they have enough time—and co-operation. Yes, that would be the decent, the courageous thing to do, Dad. And believe me," Hank said warmly, reaching out to pat him on the shoulder, "I'm speaking in your interest."

Jack was unable to smile now. When self-deception reached such complacency, it could not be answered. He shrank away from him, opened the porch door, and went into the house again. "Shirley! Shirley!" he called. "I'm going to have to leave you." She peered out of the kitchen, where apparently she had been putting away food. "We're not getting anywhere. I don't know how to talk to him. I—I—it's just as if he were a stranger. Someone I never saw before," he tried, rather incoherently, to explain.

Hank came in from the porch, seemed to think he was saying something uncomplimentary, was on him in an instant and grabbed him by the shoulder. "Now listen! I won't have this sort of thing!" He spoke as if he were dealing with a drunk or a psychopath. "Out you go! For your own good!" He hustled him towards the door. "If you want to have hysterics you'll have to have them somewhere else!"

Shirley was now fully in the living-room, and Jean, her eyes still red, had followed her. Mother and daughter stared at the two men.

Jack realised his powerlessness, as well as his inability even to begin to explain what he wanted to say. "Good-bye, dear. Good-bye, Jean!"

"Come on now," Hank said more gently, but still moving him towards the door. "You'll thank me some day for this."

It was a little too much, and Jack flared up, "I don't think I will! I've never encountered such wilful distortion in my ent——"

Hank pushed his father through the front door and released him; it would never do to let anyone see their struggle from the street. "You'll thank me when you see things more clearly," he said benignly.

Jack put his hand on his abdomen, as if merely hitching his trousers. The cheque-book was there. At his age he would have to be content with surreptitious attack, and he must restrain a desire to threaten Hank, to call upon him to withdraw from the campaign or face some very unpleasant consequences. *That* would be a serious mistake; it would reveal his own part in the counter-attack. So he merely smiled again, sadly, and said, "Well, young man, I suppose this is our last conversation. We just don't seem able to——"

"You'll be all right soon again, Dad! Just look upon it as a disease that you have to be cured of, and in a little while——" Convinced of his own health, Hank attempted to be magnanimous. It was a little too much for his father, who walked off the porch quickly and down the cement path to his car stiffly. He did not dare readjust the cheque-book, though it now bulged noticeably, he feared, on the left side of his trousers. If Hank ran after him and demanded an explanation, as he expected, it might be seen and taken away from him. But Hank did not run after him, and he got into his car, and it started promptly, and he drove away. After a few blocks a strange impulse to weep left him; he knew he must reconcile himself to the impossibility of ever getting close to Hank; and by the time he was driving up the woodland path that led to his home, he was feeling

better. Much better, in fact, as he looked forward to breaking the good news to Augusta.

IT took Augusta some time to understand what Jack was saying. She had not expected him to come home so soon, and he was more excited than she had seen him in a long time, except for his anger during the radio broadcast the night before. That was the first indication she had had in over a year of emotions he was said to have shown freely when he was younger. Perhaps he seemed casual enough to her guests, who had moved from the kitchen to the studio in his absence and been joined unexpectedly by another guest, less welcome, but the signs of excitement were obvious to her. His neck muscles were tense, his colour extra ruddy. And when he asked to see her alone, and took her upstairs to his study, and locked the door, and pulled a cheque-book out of his trousers, as if it were a white rabbit, she was puzzled. What he said did not make sense. There were odd fragments about Shirley and Jean that she couldn't fit into any pattern.

None of it troubled her, however, because he was obviously in high spirits. "Start all over again," she urged.

"The whole picture has changed."

"What picture has changed?"

"*The* picture!"

"I'm sorry to be so stupid, but——"

"I've got him!"

"Who?"

"Who caused the whole trouble?"

"I don't know. Who?"

"You don't know! Why did I——? Why are we having any trouble at all?"

"I don't——"

"Hank, of course!"

"Hank?"

"Yes! I've got him!"

"How did you get him?"

"With this!" He held up the cheque-book.

"What's that?"

"This is what is going to lose the election for him!"

"Did you take it from him?"

"Yes! I jimmied a door and stole it!"

"But—— Are you sure that——?"

"Perfectly all right! Done every day!"

"Now, darling——"

"Routine stuff. Now the question is, how exactly am I going to use it? As a matter of fact I'd like to get somebody else to use it. And just act as if I had nothing to do with it."

"Please start all over again," she begged.

He told her, simply enough, the whole story, now that he had succeeded in working up an enormous appetite for it, and she enjoyed every moment. She enjoyed it until she heard of the nastiness of Hank on the front porch, and realised again what a desperately sick antagonist they had to deal with. The cheque-book, of course, should be used to drive him out of politics for ever. There was no way of undoing the damage he had already done, but there *was* a way to prevent him from doing any more, and not only self-protection but public interest required that his political career be ended at once.

"Now the question is, should I make the cheque-book public myself? Or should I turn it over to Harold Withers and keep out of the whole thing?"

"Turn it over to Mr. Withers."

"That's what I think."

"Oh yes!"

"But should I call up Brent and give him a warning? He and I were supposed to get together today. About the radio broadcast."

"Don't do anything," she said hesitantly.

"No?"

"No!"

"Just turn it over to Harold Withers, and don't get in touch with Brent?"

"That's right!"

"Maybe you're the best politician of all."

"Oh, I don't know anything about——"

"Yes, you do! I'll just give the cheque-book and the papers in it to Withers. He'll be glad enough to get them. I'll make my own conditions. I'll make him agree to see that they're returned. That ought to be easy. I only hope Hank doesn't start doing that paper work he was talking about and miss the cheque-book. Good! I'll see Withers at the Barn Dance tonight. I'll give it to him then."

"No, do it now."

"But aren't we having lunch early today? Because of the game? You remem——"

"We'll hold lunch."

"Maybe you're right. They might be able to photograph the cheque-book and slip it back this afternoon. While Hank is at the game—*with* his family, of course, getting photographed himself. Yes, you're right! I'll go now. But I'd better telephone first."

Mr. Withers was not at his office, but he *was* at home, and Jack got him and made an appointment to see him at once and went right back to town in his car. This time, however, he carried the cheque-book and the other papers in a brief-case. And Augusta felt glad again that she had married a man who could take ideas from her and acknowledge that they were better than his own and not force her to make him believe that he had thought of them himself. She felt better as she returned to her guests, who had been joined unexpectedly by the unwelcome Mr. Rudenko, who seemed determined to get his interview and was apparently quite willing to wait until he *had* to be invited to lunch. What should she do to distract him? Get Sue of course! They had become quite friendly last night during the square-dance. She would call Sue and ask her to lunch.



**J**ACK was slow in returning, so slow that Augusta was afraid they would have to eat lunch without him, when he walked in the door. She was placing Sue next to Mr. Rudenko when Jack came in with a quiet smile and it was immediately apparent, at least to her, that his mission had been a success. He merely started kidding Mr. Rudenko, and she knew all was well. Later she learned in detail how he had caught Mr. Withers just before he was about to leave for a near-by town and obtained Mr. Withers's promise not to use his name in any way in connection with the papers. Mr. Withers had recognised their importance as soon as he saw them, of course, and said they would be photographed and then returned to their place on the top of Hank's filing cabinet, if possible without his knowing they had ever been taken. His absence during the football game would facilitate their return. As a matter of fact, Mr. Withers got quite excited, the more he thought of the windfall his own campaign had received, and also fairly crafty: he remembered a friend who worked for the gas and electric company who would be the perfect man for the job.

It was a great comfort to Augusta to get concrete evidence that her husband was not as helpless as she had feared. Disinterested thought did not necessarily cripple. Within the space of a morning, after sustaining a weirdly unfair attack, he had made a neat and devastating counter-thrust. At breakfast he had looked bewildered; at lunch he was in excellent spirits. Later he blamed himself for not thinking sooner of Hank's political weak spot—that is, his finances—but now he was content to enjoy his own luck and his own triumph.

How wonderful that he was willing to be unethical in defence of her! Not grossly unethical but just unethical enough. An ideal husband. Now she would have her child, she was sure of it. She had married a man on whom she could rely. At last she could understand—what she never

really believed before—how he had actually outwitted the Russian secret police, whom he still called the Gay Pay Oo, despite more than one subsequent change of initials, and how he had been bold enough and foxy enough to convince two wives that he was dead and to slip his neck out of the alimony noose. No wonder he caught on at once to the poor raccoon's trick! He had used it himself.

The slander about him was nasty and no doubt clinging. But if they laughed at it or ignored it, it would slowly die out. After all, it wasn't the worst thing that could have happened. She had seen so much misery even before the war; as a young bride, newly arrived in London, she had kept open house for refugees on their way from Germany to North and South America; and the blitz had given her further new perspective on what human beings can endure. The injury done Jack was irritating but unimportant. Slander always followed the latest curve of the imagination; if he had lived fifty years earlier, it would have been enough to call him a libertine; now he had to be accused of violating one of the few sexual tabus that still existed.

"When are we going to have our interview?" Mr. Rudenko asked almost at once. He had been playing up to Sue, but his romantic attentions came to a halt when a business opportunity presented itself.

"Maybe we could talk at the game," said Jack. "Why don't you come along?"

"Would you like to?" Mr. Rudenko asked Sue.

"Maybe I would," said Sue, who had refused all previous invitations to any athletic event.

"Oh, come on," said Augusta.

"All right, I will!"

"I understand there was a little rumpus in your hotel last night, Mr. Rudenko," said Jack.

"Rumpus?" Mr. Rudenko asked defensively.

"Danny Greenup was telling me about it just now. I ran into him in town, dear, after my business meeting—that's why I'm late. Seems that one of the men guests and one of the women guests had a difference of opinion. The man

guest hates Communism so much that when the woman guest made a remark that he thought was vaguely Stalinist he took exception to it. Actually it wasn't. She just said something about how badly paid the hat-check girls are. The woman doesn't even know who Stalin is, and thinks Marx makes men's suits, at least according to Danny. But they got into a quarrel, just the same. Seems they'd had a drink or two. And the lady threw the gentleman out of her room. She's pretty husky. And then slammed the door. And the gentleman didn't have any clothes on at all, and had to call—"

"Jack! What are you saying!" Augusta protested.

"Go on, go on!" said Gaby.

"What hotel was this?" Dr. Pomeroy asked. "Aren't we staying at the same hotel?" he asked Mr. Rudenko.

"Maybe. I don't know," said Mr. Rudenko.

"Maybe! But you were just saying how sharp the bathroom fixtures are!"

"It's the American House," said Jack.

"That's it!" said Dr. Pomeroy. "Goodness! And to think I slept through it all!"

"So did I," said Mr. Rudenko with finality.

"What a shame!" Gaby lamented. "It must have been very interesting. The gentleman had no clothes on at all?"

"Gaby!" Augusta protested.

"Augusta! What's the matter with you? Artists aren't supposed to be prudes."

"Artists can have just as much respect for the decencies as anyone else. The bohemian day is over," Augusta insisted.

Mr. Rudenko looked relieved, Jack looked amused, and Gaby refused to accept defeat easily. "If Cairo Thornton were here, he would not let you bury bohemianism so fast. He was saying yesterday——"

It was a good opening, and Augusta did not let it slip. "Cairo Thornton *can't* be here. He got so bohemian last night that the police asked him to leave town."

"No! I don't believe it!" said Gaby.

"No!" said Mr. Rudenko.

"Why, he was going to talk to me about a part in his new play," said Dolores. "I couldn't have taken it, but——"

Even Sue seemed surprised and shaken. "But we were supposed to talk today!"

"What about?" Augusta asked.

"Oh, he said last night that even now, when he's had so many hits, it's sometimes hard to raise money for a new script, and I thought—— Well, it *might* be interesting to get into the theatre. It's not like dancing, but——"

"I know a better investment than the theatre," Mr. Rudenko said firmly.

"You do?"

"Yes. Publishing. It's safer, and you work with better material. The playwrights, even the best of them, aren't in a class with the critics and the novelists and the poets."

"But I don't have any feeling for books. Oh, a few of them of course, but they don't excite me the way——"

"Why did sse police ask Cairo Ssornton to leave Trimble?" Gaby demanded precisely of Augusta.

"I don't know."

"Augusta!"

"I really don't."

"Jack! *You* tell me!"

"I don't know either."

"Oh! You make me furious!"

"I think I could guess, but I really don't know anything."

Gaby continued to try to worm a few facts out of him, and he continued to dodge her as skilfully as any insect ever dodged any woodpecker. The result was hilarious, and Augusta enjoyed it until her conscience troubled her with the thought, 'Goodness! We don't bait bulls any more, but we do bait sissies, and with just as much zest as our ancestors showed for bulls. We're cruel, cruel, cruel! Who knows, somebody somewhere may be being just as cruel to Jack at this moment!' And just then she came upon the most painful evidence of man's cruelty she had found all day: while he was fencing verbally with Gaby, and with his usual agility parrying each of her scandalous questions, Jack had slipped

his arm about Dolores' shoulders and was holding her close to him. She had known Dolores was attractive, and that he was susceptible, but she wasn't prepared for anything like this! Goodness! The doctor had warned her against any sexual intercourse at all during her pregnancy, for fear it might make her again miscarry, and she had known that the next months were going to be hard on Jack, but she had expected to console him with some makeshift love, and anyway she had assumed their marriage went so deep that he would never even look at another woman, let alone make up to her.

Was he merely teasing? No, he had a perfectly straight face.

It was just too much. She had never expected *anything* as cruel as this. And right under her nose. No bones about it. It was all she could do to refrain from rising to her feet and denouncing them publicly and then going upstairs to her room in tears.

36

THEY arrived at the stadium just before the game began, and Augusta wished she had not come. Jack was very gallant to her, helped her up steps, and held on to her arm, but he also kept Dolores near him, maintained a running conversation with her, and when they reached their places made sure she sat next to him. Meanwhile Augusta, who had begun to be fond of the girl and to worry about her musical career, disliked her intensely. As for Jack, she had tried to get a moment alone with him before they left the house, but he had artfully avoided it. She was angry with him, and feared that her emotion, together with sitting so long in the open air, might have a bad effect upon her health. Fortunately, the air was mild, and the sun so warm that she felt more comfortable when she took off a light woollen coat. Because Jack liked it especially, she had put on a scarlet jacket that had been made for her in London of the same cloth that went into the dress tunics of officers of the fashionable Guards regiments.

The stadium had been given the college by Brent, and its immense concrete horseshoe, which had never been completely filled, was one more evidence of his unflinching generosity to local education, except in the matter of getting good teachers. Gay ensigns fluttered, national and collegiate, where the horseshoe's nails would have been. The stadium always looked spruce; he had also given a sum to see that it was well cared for; and some day, he insisted, it would prove to be none too large. "A dog grows up to match its feet," he had said confidently. It was a booster's optimism, rather attractive, and she had encountered less of it in the Middle West than she remembered from her own youth. The Second World War, and still more the years afterwards, seemed to have dried it up, especially in the younger generation. Naïve expansiveness had become a sign of age, something that dated its affirmant, even here in the homeland of George F. Babbitt.

Behind her two voices were talking, a man's and a woman's, and she grew interested in what they were saying:

"No, her name's Jean. She's two years old." That was the woman.

"She must be three." That was the man.

"I read it in the paper. Two."

"She looks bigger than that to me. Why's he waving that pennant? He didn't go to Trimble."

"No. Princeton."

"Why's he waving it, then?"

"After all he's *from* here."

"You can have him." The man said it bitterly.

"The paper said they were already talking about him in New York and Washington."

"You can have him."

"Well, *I'm* going to vote for him."

Augusta meanwhile noticed Hank, sitting several tiers down with Shirley and Jean, and standing up to be photographed. There was scattered applause when the crowd became aware of who he was and what was going on. It seemed to come chiefly from students, but the woman sitting

behind her, to judge by her voice and what she said, must be of more than college age. His popularity was not confined to any single group. It was real, the creation of genuine inner needs. Once again, in spite of all that Jack had said, in spite of his calm reassurances that Hank would now be forced from the campaign, or badly beaten, she was alarmed. The reality of the excitement he created, even in those who disliked him, frightened her.

Mr. Rudenko was asking Sue, "Is that his wife and child?"

"Yes," said Sue, "he doesn't go anywhere without them now."

"He didn't have them with him last night."

"Oh, they have to sleep some time, to rest up for the *crowds*."

"That wasn't a bad hand he got."

"Oh, the people love him, just love him!"

"What have you got against him?"

"Everything!"

"Tell me about the ballet. It must cost a lot to put on!" Mr. Rudenko could be tactful when he wanted to.

"Oh, they couldn't get along without contributions."

"Books can make money, you know, even good books that don't get on the best-seller list."

Gaby was talking farther away, in the tier behind, and less audibly, to Dr. Pomeroy, but Augusta heard her say, "Do you really ssink ssat?"

"I do indeed! This is a time when we can't afford to cultivate our little gardens. And especially those of us with political talents. Believe me, I know what I'm talking about! The men spreading the new life abroad are our unsung heroes. If we retire into our ivory towers, it may be the last thing we ever do!"

"Are you sure you are not exaggerating—just a little? Isn't ssere always ssis kind of alarm——?"

"No, ma'am, I'm not! This is——"

Jack had been chatting gaily with Dolores until Hank stood up to be photographed. Then he became silent, and Augusta felt sure that he had been frightened, as she was,

by one more demonstration of his son's curious hold on crowds. They had discussed it many times. If education were to mean anything at all, and if democracy were to continue, there would have to be much more clarity about its real enemies, which were neither foreign Powers nor domestic demagogues but our own minds. Totalitarianism and demagogues, like their political opposites, were strictly the creation of the mental processes of the common man. The point had been made by certain novelists and psychologists, and Jack was trying in his book to develop it concretely in terms of his own experience—a task modest enough, but so much more important than any *field* work, he believed, that it exempted him from that.

"What did Chaliapin say?" Dolores asked.

"Oh! Well, he said—— Let me see," Jack searched his memory and continued in an excellent Russian accent. "He said, 'Eleven o'clock in the morning! Chaliapin sing at eleven o'clock in the morning! Why, I don't begin to spit until noon!'" But the familiar story had lost its laugh, even for a singer, because the teller's mind had wandered.

Just then a whistle blew and the game began. Some men in blue advanced, a brown ball sailed high in the air, and in the stadium many people stood up. The ball settled in the arms of a tall negro, in red and black, who started running through the men in light blue. For a moment it looked as if he had been tackled and thrown to the ground, but suddenly he emerged from a blue mass, all by himself, and ran towards the white sidelines. And now there were only two men in blue in front of him, and one of them dived at him and missed him, but others running behind him seemed to be gaining. Then somehow he was running in another direction, away from the white line, and had simply run round the only other man in blue, and the men behind him were no longer gaining. And then he was putting the ball down behind a far white line, and there was excitement among the few people who had come from Cincinnati, standing and cheering and waving on the opposite side of the stadium, and no excitement at all on the Trimble side,



where people sat down again glumly. The game had begun, a touchdown had been scored, and it was beautiful. A black and red thread had been woven zigzag through a field of light blue and grass-green.

WHEN the first half of the game was over, and girl cheerleaders in short blue and white skirts and thick blue and white sweaters rushed on the field—looking almost as large as the departing players and certainly more formidable; locally they were called The Corn-feds—Augusta was glad that Trimble was losing badly; it had not been hard to convince her party that now would be an unobtrusive time to slip away. And so as drum-majorettes blew whistles and the college band prepared to march on the field, she and Jack and their guests rose and started to leave the horseshoe. She had skilfully avoided delay by any of the local friends who waved at her when a man came forward and insisted upon stopping Jack with unwelcome greetings. He had a greying, crew-cut head slightly too large for his narrow shoulders, dense steel-rimmed lenses, triumphant eyes, and a voice like new cider squeezed from a green Adam's apple. It was Dr. Dimick of the English Department, who had once written an introduction to *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and was therefore famous in literary circles.

"It would appear you had a guest last night," he told Jack.

"Several."

"Ah, but one of them——!"

Jack introduced him to the other members of the party, but he greeted them perfunctorily and waited impatiently to say again, "It would appear you had a guest last night!"

"Yes?"

"And one of them came from far away to see you."

"Yes? These gentlemen came from far away." Jack indicated Mr. Rudenko and Dr. Pomeroy, while Augusta wondered irritably why he didn't seem to understand what

Dr. Dimick was driving at. Or was he merely pretending to be unaware? In either case it wasn't the right tack to take.

"No, no," said Dr. Dimick archly, "I don't mean them. I mean another."

"Who's that?"

"*White Columns?*"

"What are you trying to say?"

Augusta interrupted dryly. "He means Cairo Thornton."

"Oh." Jack really hadn't known what he was driving at. Petty malice always took him by surprise.

"Yes," said Dr. Dimick, licking his lips, "Cairo Thornton. One thought he wrote only plays, but now it appears he writes—other things."

"Van, what *are* you trying to say?"

"Well, today I became the proud possessor of a little-known *opus* by Cairo Thornton, but it's already become one of the rarest items in my library, and something tells me it won't lack for read——"

"Oh. You mean the journal?"

"Precisely. I mean the journal."

"Well——?"

"Oh, nothing, nothing. Except I did think that perhaps, since he is such a good friend of yours, perhaps you could get him to autograph my copy." This was patently an afterthought, but none the less effective.

"Now wait a minute. Why exactly do you call him a good friend of mine? I never saw him before yesterday."

"Oh, naturally, naturally. But the next time you see him, *please* ask——"

"If I'm not mistaken, he's left town."

"Oh dear, that *is* a pity. But the next time you see him, *please*——"

"I don't expect ever to see him again. He dropped in yest——"

"Oh, naturally, naturally. But just in case you *should* see him——" Augusta noticed that Jack, his face getting red, was about to say something but checked himself—"please tell him that there's one admirer of his, out here in the wilder-

ness, who takes inexpressible delight in every word he writes, even when it is obviously not pruned—or indeed intended for anyone else's eyes. Tell him——”

“What's that on your collar? Ugh!” Jack acted as if he were flicking an insect off Dr. Dimick's collar. “Looked like a spider. Well, so long! Nice to see you, Van!” And Jack led his wife and friends away abruptly, while the triumph died in Dr. Dimick's eyes. It was a direct-action trick, a peasant stratagem that Jack had learned from the Russians and used, she had noticed, only as a last resort; and it gained the temporary advantage of shaking off a pestiferous gadfly, but it did not long forestall the explanation that had to be given the other witnesses to the scene.

“What was it all about, Uncle Jack?” Sue asked as they walked towards their car.

“Oh, nothing,” said Augusta quickly. “It's all simply——”

“Tell her,” Jack insisted.

Augusta knew of a perfectly good way of telling about the journal so that it wouldn't in any way be connected with him, but he interrupted and insisted upon revealing everything, including Hank's attempt to discredit him because the author of the journal had been his guest.

The others listened intently. It was plain they enjoyed the story, even those who wished him well.

“*Mon Dieu!* Is sse smear campaign!” Gaby said, excited by her direct participation in a highly-publicised phenomenon of American politics.

“That's it.”

“But what will you do?”

“Nothing.”

“But sse people—won't ssey believe it then? *C'est affreux*—ridiculous too—you of all people!—but——!”

“What is there I *can* do?” He squeezed Dolores's shoulders. “Even if I act as if I were publicly unfaithful to Augusta, nobody will believe me.”

“Is that why you've been playing up to me?” Dolores demanded.

“Not at all!”

"Ohh!" She laughed. "You're a heel!"

"Not as much as I thought he was," said Augusta. They had reached their car, and he kissed her on the cheek before opening the door, and she felt better.

His misbehaviour with Dolores, which Augusta now saw had never been serious, had been both a tentative political stratagem and a practical joke of the kind that he and Danny played with boyish unexpectedness. Danny also said and did the unpredictable with a completely solemn face; it was one reason why Jack liked him. But the joke had been painful, and although she returned Jack's kiss after he got into the car beside her, she warned him, "I'll get even for that!"

"He was a perfect gentleman," Dolores assured her from the back seat.

"I'll get even," Augusta repeated.

Meanwhile she had been impressed, and pleased, by the unaccustomed compassion that Mr. Rudenko had shown upon hearing of the slander against Jack. For once Mr. Rudenko did not act from self-interest but from sympathy. "Too bad," he said to Jack spontaneously, patting his shoulder with a heavy hand. "That's a terrible thing to do." As a Jew who had been injured, perhaps irreparably, by prejudice, his heart went out to a fellow-sufferer, and she liked the warmth of feeling that unexpectedly came from him.

Unfortunately it did not last long. Before they had driven very far he had thrown away his people's gift for fellow-feeling, and apparently because a rather cruel wisecrack occurred to him. "You can relax now," he leaned forward from the back seat to say to Jack with a heartless laugh. "I'm not going to interview you. You won't be news. They'll never give you that appointment now."

Augusta was disappointed as well as shocked. Not only had Jack been needlessly hurt, Mr. Rudenko had thrown away his one good moment. A most untypical Jew, though she had observed other intellectuals of his generation, both Jew and Gentile, who made the same nihilistic mistake.

Apparently in the grip of a satirical neurosis, he didn't seem to know what he was losing when he renounced so lightly the gift of tears.

On their way home Dr. Pomeroy asked to be dropped at his hotel. He had some letters to write, he said, but would follow them later by taxicab, to resume his conversations with Jack. Not long after they reached home, however, he telephoned and wanted to speak to Jack.

When Jack came back from the telephone he told Augusta quietly—their guests were being shown pictures in the studio by Gaby—that Dr. Pomeroy had called to say that he was leaving on a late afternoon plane for Washington.

"So soon? I thought you and he were going to talk again."

"I don't think he wants to talk any more to me."

"Why not? He was so eager to——"

"The journal gives him a wonderful out. He knew he didn't have much chance of getting me anyway, and he didn't like the idea of going back to Washington and admitting failure. Now he only has to mention the journal and my name will never come up for a State Department job again. You know what *that* rumour will do. So now he's grabbing this plane, and seizing this opportunity to go back to Washington and carry on the job that my dear, dear son has begun."

"Oh well, you didn't want the job anyway." She kissed him tenderly. "We thought it all out and decided against it. Didn't we?" She rubbed her cheek against his. But she was more disturbed than she let him see, and she wondered how many other jobs, jobs that he really wanted or really needed, he might lose some day for the same reason.

JACK had no desire to go to the Barn Dance, but when the time arrived he went. The local Community Chest had asked him to serve as chairman of the committee in charge of the event, and he had devoted quite a few hours to sending

out letters about it, selling tickets, arranging for decorations, hiring a band. Even so, most of the work had been done by Vern Brettschneider, the energetic secretary of the C.I.O. local, who took almost as much interest each year in this communal activity—the receipts went into a hospital fund—as in his union activities. But Jack was serving as nominal head of the committee, and it took no little time. Now, although he had no heart for it, he felt obliged to go to the dance. Ever since his return to his home town he had been pressed into such jobs, and he always found time for them. In some ways they flattered him more than any previous appointment had. And he liked to think, in spite of his scepticism, that he was ‘re-rooting’ himself.

The dance was held at the airport, in a steel hangar large enough to contain ten squares of eight costumed dancers each, surrounded by booths and sideshows that imitated those at a county fair. There was a shooting gallery, a hot-dog stand, a bar, a baseball-throwing contest, a raffle, a prize for the best jelly, the best pie, and a ‘jail’ whose prisoners were somewhat arbitrarily arrested—for wearing a necktie or not looking happy—and could only be bailed out by giving a dollar to the hospital fund. The floor was covered with sawdust. The steel beams of the hangar had been gaily concealed with corn-stalks, oak-leaves, pumpkin-heads, pine-branches, flags, bunting, and confetti streamers. Vern wanted to show that he and ‘the boys’ were just as good at that sort of thing as any member of the white-collar class, and each year he took many photographs in colour of the display he had helped create.

Jack was glad that Augusta had stayed home, and that Gaby and Dolores, looking disturbed about her, had stayed with her. He was also glad that Sue and Rudenko had left before dinner in Sue’s smart red Jaguar. Sue’s clever way of saying “Swish!” nearly every time he moved and the double meanings that she read into his most innocent remarks had been funny at first, and then after a while he had got tired of being teased about his fictitious effeminacy. It had been every bit as inspired as the lunch-time jokes at

Cairo Thornton's expense. Jack was glad she was gone, and that she had taken Rudenko with her. Rudenko had quickly let him know again, as soon as he revealed Dr. Pomeroy's departure and the probable reason for it, that there wasn't any point in interviewing him now; he wasn't going to be news.

"There's more chance now that your son will be news," Rudenko had said with mounting enthusiasm. "In fact I don't see much chance that you'll *ever* be news again. Unless you break some law. Or get yourself killed in some spectacular way. But it would have to be very spectacular *now*."

"I guess I'll manage to survive," Jack had said, and restrained himself from adding, "But don't count too much on my son's being news either."

It had been better to let Rudenko seem to score a total victory. When Hank was forced out of the election it would be time enough for the magazine writer to realise that he too was not news-worthy. To anticipate the event would not be seemly in his father—and might lead afterwards to the correct suspicion that he had had a hand in it. And so Rudenko had departed gloating.

The day had been a chastening. Out of the blue had come brand-new punishment to Jack for his paternal insufficiencies. There had never been such manifest evidence of his son's hatred—hatred that in its savagery and un-wisdom came close to madness. It would not only destroy Hank's ambitions, it would finally, when the truth came out, discredit him still more than it discredited his father. He had not been as cool as he seemed; he had not been level-headed. His behaviour had been as irrational, as ill-considered as his borrowed 'new conservatism', which in his case at least was just a clever cover-up for wilful, strong-armed ignorance.

From the standpoint of national sanity and survival it was a blessing that the boy's career was going to be nipped in the bud. Jack knew that he should be feeling better, but he couldn't. On that day the boy had plunged both of them into a mess that would dirty his father publicly, and himself

privately, the rest of their days. The stickiness of pitch had never been better demonstrated.

Jack was sobered abruptly, and lost any inclination toward indulgence of his melancholy, as soon as he entered the hangar, about ten minutes before the crowd was expected to begin to arrive, and saw Vern Brettschneider.

"How's it going, Vern?" he asked.

"Oh, fine, fine, fine!" Vern said evasively. "Mr. Trimble!" he continued, as if just recognising him. "I didn't know you were coming tonight." There was an unaccustomed coolness in his manner, and he did not, as usual, call Jack by his first name. Also there was no reference to the party he had attended the night before at Jack's.

"Of course I came."

"Oh! You didn't have to put yourself out."

"I'm not putting myself out. I wanted to come." Jack was puzzled. The night before he and Vern had made an appointment to meet at the hangar shortly before the party began, to see if there were any last-minute problems that had to be faced. At that time Vern had been cordiality itself.

"You really didn't have to *bother*." Vern spoke in a tone that he usually saved for satirical imitations of society women. His close-cropped blond Germanic head bristled with proletarian scorn.

"It wasn't any bother," Jack said sharply, beginning to understand what was wrong with him. "I worked hard for this, and I want to see it."

"Yes, you did work hard, that's right," Vern admitted in a tone that implied, "But if we'd known then what we know about you now, we'd never have let you get mixed up with it."

"All right, then!" Jack continued more sharply. "I'm here and I'm in charge of it. How is it going?"

"It's going all right, Mr. Trimble."

"Did you get the jack-o'-lanterns from the school?"

"Oh, by this time we know how to do our job, Mr. Trimble."



"What about the dance records? We'll use those when the band is resting."

"We've got all the records we need, Mr. Trimble."

"Have you tested your public-address system?"

"Yes, Mr. Trimble."

"What about the police? Have you——?"

"All drunks will be thrown out quietly, Mr. Trimble."

"Certainly is well organised," said a voice behind them. "I'll bet you it's the best organised old Barn Dance we ever had!" It was Danny Greenup, with Dena on his arm, both of them looking very handsome together, as usual, and certainly very welcome to Jack at that moment. Danny had obviously been listening to his dialogue with Vern Brettschneider, but did not stop to comment on it further, once they had greeted one another.

"Did you hear the news!" Danny burst out.

"What news?"

"Harold Withers has done it!"

"What'd he do?" Vern was as much interested as Jack.

"This morning I wouldn't have given two cents for his chances. Tonight he's almost sure to win!"

"What'd he do?" Vern brightened when he heard this; he and his union were supporting Withers, but without much hope of electing him.

"He was talking at Doakesville. It came over TV. He showed a photostatic copy of Hank Trimble's cheque-book. Boy! Saturday night! Everybody tuned in. We'll *have to* print this. Jack, I came here because Augusta said on the phone you'd be here. I knew you'd want to know!" Danny and Dena smiled happily at Jack, and eagerly too. They wanted to win back his friendship, and had hurried to the Barn Dance for that purpose.

"Cheque-book?" Vern said. "What was in it?"

"Plenty! The myth of the poor struggling young attorney who lives near the gas-house is now dead and buried. He's got money! Real money. And there were some entries from a contracting firm in Columbus that will take a lot of explaining. How come he got about twelve thousand from them?"

"Wow!" said Vern. "That's wonderful. Wait till the boys hear this!"

"It was all done with photostats. How he got 'em I don't know. But you can't believe everything that's supposed to be done with photostats," Danny said pointedly to Vern. "There were some other photostats going around today and an attempt to tie them in with Jack here. *That's* strictly a phony."

"Yeah?" Vern asked.

"The photostats were O.K., but the attempt to tie them in with Jack was a phony. He hardly knows the guy, and anyway he's not that kind of a guy himself. But anyone can see that."

"Yeah?" Vern asked.

"Yeah! It was all part of a smear, thought up by Hank Trimble. He was afraid his dad was coming out against him, and so he wanted to smear him before he could say anything. So nobody would listen to him when he did. That's the story there."

"Is that true, Jack?" Vern asked.

"Yes, it's true." Jack found himself reluctant to say even so little.

"Gee! What a lousy thing to do! And they almost had me believing it. Of course I didn't really, but—— Gee, Jack, I'm sorry." Vern held out his hand.

Jack took it without much enthusiasm. "It's all right, Vern."

"Gee, Jack, I'm sorry!"

"Tell the boys the real story, Vern!" Dena insisted. "Tell everybody you see. That's the best way to help Jack."

"I sure will, Dena!"

Jack thanked Danny and Dena with more enthusiasm. He had been touched by their efforts on his behalf, but he suddenly felt tired and wanted to be alone. He told Vern that on second thought he wouldn't stay for the Barn Dance, thanked Danny and Dena again, saw Hank and Pete Traub the Sheriff coming in (they looked cheerful; they couldn't have heard the news), left the hangar quickly, found his car

outside, and drove away from the airport while the crowd was beginning to arrive. Their headlights shone into his eyes. He must have had to face the glare of at least a hundred cars before he came to a dark road that led to his home. He was glad he hadn't stayed for the dance. There would surely have been more scenes like that with Vern, and he didn't feel up to them. Maybe some day he would be able to see people again with some pleasure. Meanwhile he just wanted to be left alone.

## PART THREE

39

WHEN he saw Hank and Pete Traub entering the hangar, and reaching into their topcoat pockets for one of the many tickets they had each bought for the Barn Dance, Danny moved more quickly towards them than his bum hip usually permitted. He had never approached Hank with so much pleasure. If his cheerfulness meant that he actually hadn't heard the news—it seemed incredible, but then he might have been riding in Pete's car when the story broke—Danny was in a position to report to him his own death-blow, take down his last rattle, and all the time seem merely to be doing a necessary job as a member of the working Press. It was one of those breaks that occur all too rarely anywhere, but are especially relished in smaller communities: to be able to bring to an enemy, under a pretence of sympathy, and in the course of one's duty, first word of his own disaster.

Hank was looking particularly helpless at the moment, as he fished for a ticket; he knew how to appeal to the maternal sympathies of every woman within a hundred miles and at the same time suggest the hidden energies of an Earnest Young Servant of the People. Dear little Hanky-Panky, who wasn't going to go to Congress after all!

Danny moved in for the kill. He hadn't felt so good since he spat tobacco-juice on the Southern Cal end's shoes and got him so mad that he did just what Notre Dame had been trying to goad him into doing all along.

"Got any statement to make, Hank, old boy?" Danny asked in a sweet-as-pie voice.

"Oh, hello, Danny! How are you, old man?" Hank wrung his hand affectionately. "Statement about what?"

"You saw it on TV." By this time Danny knew perfectly well that he hadn't."

"Saw what?"

"On TV?" Pete Traub echoed.

"Withers's speech. You know! Of course he must be all wrong, but——"

"What did he say?"

"Well, for one thing—of course he must be all wrong, and I know you can disprove everything he said—but he did have some photostats, and——"

"Photostats of what?"

"Photostats of your cheque-book and your account with the Guaranty Trust Company in New York. He says they prove you have a lot of money—in the bank, real estate, stocks and——"

"Lot of money?"

"Did you say photostats?" Pete Traub asked. "Whose handwriting?"

"Oh, they're in Hank's handwriting all right. They had a handwriting expert check on that. They have a sworn statement from him. Of course there must be some explanation. But Withers says you're a phony. You've been trying to kid the voters, pretending to live poor, near the gas-house, and all that."

"Pretending to live near the gas-house! I guess I live where I live, don't I?"

"Well, he means that you don't really have to, that it's all—well, sort of an act you're putting on. Also, there's about twelve thousand in deposits from the Boylon Corporation in Columbus that he thinks ought to be explained."

"The Boylon Corporation? Who's that?" Hank asked.

"You don't know them?" Danny took a thick black pencil and a wad of coarse paper from his jacket pocket, and started to write something.

"Well, I *may* know them, but I don't recall them offhand," Hank said quickly.

"—doesn't recall them offhand," Danny said half-aloud as he wrote something down.

"Now look here, don't start quoting me until I get full particulars!" Hank ordered firmly.

"That's what I'm here for, to see if you have any statement to make."

"No! Absolutely no statement until I have a full report on these charges that have been made against me."

"—no statement to make," said Danny half-aloud, writing something down.

"I'll have a statement for you later!"

"Do you deny the charges?"

"I'm not saying anything until I read them!"

"—refuses to deny the charges." Danny knew he would never dare to print any of this, but it was getting a mighty big rise out of Hank, and he enjoyed it. He noticed that Rudenko and Sue had come in, rather swankily, and were standing near-by and listening to them, as indeed were several other newcomers. He enjoyed that also.

"Listen, Danny, you're not printing anything until I say so!"

"No?" Danny looked at him like a playfully respectful ape.

"No!"

"Come on, Hank," Pete Traub urged. "Let's get out of here. We got work to do!"

Hank started to agree with him, but checked himself. "Why, I like it here, Pete," he said with a relaxed laugh. "Why should we leave just when the fun is beginning?"

"We got work to do."

"That can wait. No! We're staying at the party!" He said it as easily, as lightly, as his father would have said it. Danny found himself admiring him: at that moment he was a chip off the old block.

This did not prevent Danny from keeping after him, "When are you going to have a statement for me, Hank? We put the Sunday paper to bed at——"

"You'll have it in plenty of time. Now I'm going to enjoy the party." Hank turned and greeted his cousin Sue and Rudenko warmly, as if nothing had happened, dismissed their questions with a laugh, and walked with them and Pete Traub towards the dance floor, where the music was tuning

up and the caller was calling, "We need two! Two more!"

"Here's two!" Hank shouted, grabbing one of Sue's hands, and leading her towards the floor. Ordinarily she didn't like him, as everyone in town knew, but she didn't mind dancing at all and went out on the floor with him, smiling happily.

While Danny was watching this scene, and admiring Hank in spite of himself, Rudenko crowded up to him. "What's it all about?" he asked.

"You are witnessing the end of a promising political career," said Danny without trying to conceal his satisfaction.

"Yes?" Rudenko said apprehensively, as if he were already beginning to regret any past association with a loser.

"You'd better tear up all that crap you've been writing about him. He isn't going to go to Congress."

"No?" Rudenko looked like a bookmaker on a day when the horses laugh at the form sheets. "Why not?"

"He thought the people were even dumber than they are."

The music started, and Hank honoured his partner, and swung his partner, and do-si-do'd, sashayed, and did all the other stuff he'd been learning lately, as if he were having the time of his life. He certainly was a campaigner. He certainly was going down fighting.

IT was Sunday, and the hands of Brent Trimble wanted to play golf. They were mechanic's hands, stubby, strong, hairy, clever, and now that they rarely had tools to make them happy they longed for the reassuring feel of a driver. They had to be content, however, with one day's satisfaction a week, and his legs and back had to be content with one day's jog over a good 7,200-yard course that his own money, more than anybody else's, had made possible. He had leased most of the land to the club at a purely nominal figure. And now that he had taken Marge to church and

taken her home again, he wanted to get out on the sunny land, which was at its best this time of year, with still some green in the grass and the air just nippy enough for a wind-breaker, and have as much fun as he could before sundown.

He could not play. His deepest love was going to be defeated. He should have known that Hank would get into trouble. Politics were not meant for young men with money. Occasionally the rule had been broken, but only occasionally. Now there was a mess, and he should never have let it happen. He should never have let Hank sell him a bill of goods. He should never have spoken up at the meeting of Republican leaders last summer and proposed Hank's name for the congressional nomination. Never have arranged beforehand that no other names be proposed. Never have jammed it through. It was one of the worst mistakes he had made.

The boy had meant so much to him. He had given the affection that never came from Sue. He had given it abundantly, surprisingly, in gifts, visits, timid entreaties for guidance. And even today, as he stood in the living-room, with an earnest expression on his tired face, waiting for his uncle's return from church, he gave it again. There was obviously more genuine respect in his eyes than there had ever been in them for his father. The boy loved him: there was no doubt of that. But the boy had not obeyed him. Instead of conducting the inconspicuous run of the mill campaign that his uncle had advised, he had tried to be a little too *clever*. He had antagonised someone, and someone had retaliated. Now he was in a mess, and it all came from disobedience, from thinking himself smarter than he was.

"Hello, Uncle Brent," Hank greeted him when he came into the living-room. "I won't take much of your time, I promise. Hello, Aunt Marge!" Hank kissed her. "Was it a good sermon?" Meanwhile Brent's eye noticed, with anguish, that the red Chinese vase was not in its usual place.

"It was beautiful, Hank. Weren't you there?" she asked with surprise.

"I couldn't come today. Politics."



"What a shame! It was so beautiful. That man's mind—how does he ever think of such things to say!"

"Now run along, Mother," Brent ordered firmly in a tone that he ordinarily saved for the office. "Hank and I have business to discuss."

"Yes, Baba," she said, looking hurt. "I'm going. I'm going." And she left reproachfully. "Good-bye, Hank. It seems I've got to go. Baba has business to discuss."

"Good-bye, Aunt Marge. You must tell me about the sermon later."

"I will, dear, I will." She finally left like a pouting child.

"I won't take much of your time, Uncle Brent, I promise."

"Sit down!" Brent ordered him. "This is not something that can be rushed through. You've got yourself into a mess and because you didn't see fit to follow my suggestions. Now we've got to think the whole thing out carefully."

"Yes, sir," Hank said contritely. "I realise I've made some mistakes."

"Mistakes!" Brent started to get mad, but quickly controlled himself. "Oh, don't worry, I'm not going to raise hell with you. But obviously you've got to quit. Better do it today."

"I'm not going to quit!"

"Oh yes, you've got to. Do it gracefully. It'll all blow over. Nobody'll hold it against you. Can't blame a man for trying."

"I'm not going to quit!"

"Sorry, you've got to."

"It seems to me you're judging me without a hearing."

"Am I? Well, what have you got to say for yourself?"

"Plenty. But I'm not going to say it to you. I'm going to say it to the people."

Some of Brent's admiration for the kid returned. "What are you going to tell them?"

"Oh, no, I'm not telling you, I'm telling them."

"You'd better quit. Now. I'll get some of the fellows up here, and we'll work out a statement."

"I won't sign it."

"What if I told you to?"

"I wouldn't."

"Hmm. Think you've got a good case?"

"I *know* I've got a good case."

"What is it?"

"When I get through with them they'll be more for me than ever before. I sat up last night, writing my speech. Or at least notes. And getting together a few figures."

"What about that Columbus matter?"

"That will work *for* me too. When I get through with them!"

"When do you want to give this speech?"

"Tomorrow night. Both TV and radio. *I'm* paying for it. It's already arranged."

"I could make you quit. Right now. We could force your withdrawal." Even as he spoke, however, Brent recognised his unwillingness to take so precipitate a step, especially when the kid insisted that he had a good case. The kid knew how to speak, and in matters concerning the reactions of the public he had an uncanny flair. It would be unwise to drop him now, without giving him a chance to redeem himself. Two days later, if the speech flopped, he could be dropped. But there was no need to do it now.

"I know you could. But I don't think you will."

"Why not?"

"You're too fair. You wouldn't judge me without a hearing."

Brent hesitated, and then made his decision. "All right. Give your speech. But if it's not good, if it's not *perfect*, out you go the next day. That clear?"

"Yes, sir."

"Maybe I can play golf after all. Do we have anything more to go over?"

"No, sir."

"Remember, I'm giving you your last chance!"

"I understand, sir."

"Absolutely your last chance!"

"I understand, sir."

"I *will* play golf. I thought you'd make me miss it!"

"Would you like me to call up the club for you?"

"Good idea! Call Jim Peters at the club and tell him I'll be there after all. Maybe they haven't made up their four-some."

"Yes, *sir!*"

41

IN the pose that his advertisers liked best, with a glass of beer at his elbow and a cigarette in his mouth, Danny watched the television screen in his home with more anticipation than he had ever awaited a knock-out in boxing. It was eight o'clock, Monday evening. The time had arrived when Hank was going to take his beating publicly. It was well known that he had been given a chance to slip out of the fight in a way that might ultimately have caused people to sympathise with him. He had chosen, however, to defend himself and, it was being rumoured, to counter-attack. There had been no advance copy of his speech such as he usually distributed to the Press before any major statement. Danny was as much in the dark about what he would say as anyone else, and this added a pleasant element of suspense. The spectacle was one that could not fail to delight a spectator who had been a little closer to the scene than most and had known all along that he was a phony. Now even the public was going to see it.

"Come on in," Danny shouted to Dena, who was in the kitchen, "he's going on!"

Dena didn't come fast enough.

"Come on in!" he shouted again.

"All right, all right," she said, taking off her apron, "I know what he's going to say anyway."

"Ssssh!"

A strangely distorted image of Hank appeared on the screen. He looked squat, as well as pale and tense, and his well-cut suit seemed as short-chopped as if it had been bought in a supermarket: almost like a convict's jacket.

"Good reception tonight," Dena commented.

“Sssh!”

“My friends. I stand before you tonight as a candidate for the most important legislative body in the world, the Congress of the United States.” It was amazing how twangy Hank’s speech had become. Danny had read somewhere that the poet T. S. Eliot had had a Mid-Western twang in his voice when he went originally to Harvard; now, however, in his recordings he spoke with a British accent. Hank had reversed the process and substituted homelier sounds for those he had been born into. He now sounded every bit as nasal as President Truman or General Eisenhower. “I also stand before you as a man whose honesty has been called into question.

“Now. What does a man usually do in politics when charges are made against him? I’ll tell you what. Either he just ignores them or he denies them without really going into them.

“Something tells me we’ve had enough of that sort of thing. I’m really going into them tonight, and when I get through I think you’re going to have a much clearer picture of what has been going on in this part of the great state of Ohio.

“To me a seat in the Congress of the United States would be the most solemn responsibility I can imagine. I feel that you, the voters, have a right to know all you can possibly know about the man you elect to so high an office.

“I also believe that the best answer to an attack—or, for that matter, a simple misunderstanding—is to tell the truth. And so I’m going to tell you the truth tonight, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. I’m going to speak tonight as if I were on the witness-stand, under oath, or as if I were a little child again and speaking to my mother. This is the most important, the most serious moment of my life, folks, and I’m going to lay the facts before you.

“I’m sure you’ve heard the charge that has been made by my worthy, my sincerely mistaken opponent. Briefly, the charge is this—that I have much more money than I am supposed to have.

"Is that wrong? *Of course* it's wrong! *If* I acquired any of that money dishonestly. It is also wrong, and I make no bones about this, *if* I am secretly spending any of that money on myself. Furthermore, it is wrong *if* I am merely hoarding it, withdrawing it from circulation, where it cannot help to fortify and strengthen our American way of life. That's the way I feel about it!

"When you hear my side of the story you will agree that not only was not one penny of that money acquired dishonestly but also that not one penny of it is being used for my own purposes. But to explain what really happened, to tell you the *truth*, it's going to be necessary for me to tell you a little about myself, exactly how I acquired certain sums of money and what I have done with them."

Danny put down his beer glass with a bang. "This is murder! He should have quit yesterday. Now he'll have to quit tomorrow, and it will be a lot worse for him."

"I don't think so," said Dena quietly. "It's much better than I thought it would be. Did you hear the way he spoke of his mother? Did you hear the way he said 'mother'? He's got every woman rooting for him already. And that's at least half the aud——"

"Ssssh!"

"—silver spoon in my mouth. You know, folks, that's not always an advantage. There are some people who actually, strange as it may seem, don't want it, feel embarrassed by it, feel *cheated of their God-given right* to be just like everybody else. I happen to be like that, folks. I didn't want it. And that's exactly why I moved out here. I didn't *want* to live in New York, I wanted to live right here in Ohio, among the people I felt were *my* people."

Danny snuffed out his cigarette angrily. "Oh no! He's not going to try to get away with that! They'll never fall for it."

"They'll not only fall for it, they'll love it," said Dena. "It's terrible, but why not relax and study what he's doing. Don't gripe—swipe! You're listening to a master."

"—also happen to *like* living plainly. What's more, I'll *always* like living plainly. Twenty, thirty years from now

we'll still be living in our simple little home near the gas-house—*unless* of course there get to be too many kids around the house and we have to move to a slightly bigger place in the same neighbourhood. That's a promise, neighbours! And as for the money, I don't know the exact amount of it myself, but I do know this, I've been getting it together in the form of cash, so that I could create a trust fund in the name of my wife Shirley, who will have *sole* discretion as to how it is to be used later on for the education of our children. I'm sure the mothers in my audience will understand how important that is.

"I'm doing this because I have complete faith in Shirley's judgment. Shirley comes from here, right here in Ohio, the 25th District, and her family is known to a lot of you who are kind enough to listen-in tonight. I have complete faith in Shirley's judgment, folks, because I've been learning so much from her myself. Next to my mother, she's the best teacher I ever had. When the time comes to make the right decisions about the children's education, she'll be in a position to make them. And the money will be there, increased and added to, of course, by whatever other money we've been able to save by living the way we do.

"That way, we figure, we'll do as much as any parents can to insure our children's future. I'm sure that all of you in my audience who happen to have children of your own, and are beset with the terrible problems of trying to get your children ready for the stern demands of modern life, will understand. You will know why it is of so little importance to me that I live in a plain little house—*we* like it!—and drive a plain little car. You will know why I don't want to live any better than the majority of my constituents do. You will know why I feel so confident about America's future. Why? Because like you I'm investing in it through my children's education. Alongside of that, folks, the few little sacrifices that Shirley and I have to make are as nothing. And nothing at all when you think of what our pioneer ancestors had to do without, in order that we should be living here at all in this wonderful land today."

Danny was sweating. He couldn't stay seated any longer. He didn't want to smoke and he didn't want to drink. He walked up and down, turned his back to the screen, but kept listening to what was being said.

"You're right," he admitted to Dena, "he's got 'em! He's got 'em better than he ever had 'em before. And with Taft sure to win by a landslide, he'll go right along with him to Washington. He's bounced back, damn him, he's bounced back."

"Don't take it so hard," said Dena. "Listen to him. You could learn a lot from him."

"Ssssh! What's that he's saying?"

"—as for the money I received from the Boylon Corporation in Columbus, I defy my worthy opponent—who goes into things, but doesn't go into them deeply enough—to find one cent of that money that I didn't earn honestly by giving the best I had in me as a legal consultant. I also defy him to find one cent of that money that has not gone into the special fund I am creating for my children's future.

"Let the facts speak for themselves. Since my worthy opponent has seen fit to steal *some* of my papers—but not all of them—I am going to show you all of them. I am going to take you right into my office and open my books before you. Now here is a paper that——"

Danny walked to the television machine and turned it off.

"What are you doing?" Dena protested. "Turn it on!"

"I can't take it any longer! He's going to get away with it."

"Turn it on. I want to see how he does it. Anyway, you've got to write about it."

"I'll go by the copy they send in. I can't take this any longer!"

"Will you *please* turn it on!"

"All right, but I won't stay here." Danny turned on the machine again, but quickly left the room and went outdoors for a walk, bare-headed and coatless. He was sweating too hard to need anything over him.

ON Monday night Augusta was glad that she had no guests. She was also glad that Jack had not urged her a second time to listen to the speech on the radio. She wanted to be alone and quiet. When the speech was over he would come downstairs and tell her about it. Meanwhile she had work to do, work that calmed her nerves and helped her to see things more clearly.

She was making a linen mat for one of her smaller paintings. He had rigged up a clever, movable, green-shaded light over her work-bench in a corner of the tall, soundless, otherwise dark studio. The cat was sleeping on a chair near-by, to be as close to her as possible. The only noise came from her own leather sandals when she moved about to pick up a tool, or from her very sharp knife when she cut a cardboard square against a long steel ruler.

In the same way that her work-bench formed an island of light in the vast dark studio she believed that art formed an island of light in a vast dark world. Science also, *perhaps*. She was happy that she had cooked their dinner—with some help from Jack, who was especially good with vegetables, never overdoing them—and that afterwards they had washed the dishes and utensils together. Her appetite for chores had increased, to her surprise, during her residence in Trimble. At times, of course, she wanted to get away from the house, eat somewhere else, go for a trip, see a big exciting city, and at times she had done all of these, though Cincinnati was the best they had been able to manage, in the way of cities, since coming to the Middle West; but usually she wanted nothing so much as the opportunity to live at home and to work at home. Domesticity had over-taken her. And now that she was 'sure enough pregnant' and, she was determined, sure enough going to have her baby, even the urge to travel was leaving her.

Nothing could be more uninteresting to anyone else, of course, and yet she loved her new state of mind and would have burned with a missionary zeal to indoctrinate others



with it, if she had not observed that she always antagonised those who had not had much fun in their lives when she, who had more than her share, tried to preach quietude to them. She must learn to keep her mouth shut—it was hard!—and merely watch others while they messed up their lives because they didn't have enough sense to know that the only way to happiness was the hardest and most unpopular task possible. All true wisdom *must* be esoteric. The way to it, as Spinoza had written in her favourite passage of philosophy, 'must indeed be difficult since it is so seldom discovered; for if salvation lay ready to hand and could be discovered without great labour, how could it be possible that it should be neglected almost by everybody? But all noble things are as difficult as they are rare'.

As an idea it was something she had encountered only after her unhappiness with Godfrey drove her in the direction of philosophy and religion; as a feeling it was something she had known all her life, ever since she discovered that her father was an outcast in Lexington, Kentucky. As a gifted young lawyer, educated at the aristocratic University of Virginia, he had looked forward to a brilliant career in politics, and had already won his first election, and was serving as the Fayette County prosecutor, when he encountered an enemy who had been making threats against him, near the beautiful court-house, and drew his revolver almost as quickly as his enemy drew his, and shot much straighter. This had happened in 1905, ten years before she was born. In less than ten minutes he was exonerated in court of his enemy's death, and he was also exonerated in public opinion—until a year later a similar shooting occurred, and another enemy was killed. He was officially exonerated again, but it ruined not only his political career but his law practice and, finally, himself. People feared and mistrusted him after that. Her mother had also feared and mistrusted him, although she would have fiercely denied it, although she had considered it beneath her even to defend him in what had obviously been two completely justifiable cases of self-defence.

Augusta had early learned that drawing and painting were the best ways she could escape from her agonising confusion about her father, her mother, and everyone around her. When she painted she had a chance to be calm. She began to paint when she was seven years old, and by the time she was nine she was giving most of her school-free hours—time that other little girls gave to dolls or jacks or tag—to her idea of the North Pole or the Sultan's harem or the Great Wall of China. That was why when she reached college age, during the Depression, and her father was considered lucky to have hung on to his position as a grocery-store clerk, and she attended the University of Kentucky because it was both close to home and free, she was able to charm Godfrey Jerrold with her beauty and also to astonish him with her painting technique. Already a museum keeper in the making, and a Pygmalion, he felt he had encountered raw genius, but—and this was both her blackest fear and her calmest self-questioning—perhaps it had only been abnormal specialisation.

Whatever the depth or extent of her talent, its exercise became a fixed constellation in the daily swing of her firmament, and when anything interrupted it for more than a few days she grew cross and miserable. There had been many dry spells, of course, when she had sat before her canvas and wept, it seemed, all day long, but always she had come out of them, and now that she was trying to integrate her painting with the rest of her life she was less apt to dry up or to be anxious about drying up. Her need to paint was less neurotic, less compulsive; she could busy herself with other things and not worry about it; she could feel sure that at the right time her demon would seize hold of her and *make* her paint. It was the best reassurance she had ever felt—and the reason why she believed that *this* time she *would* have her baby. Her demon would no longer rebel against the complications of childbirth. Her unconscious had somehow been convinced that she could be a painter and a mother too.

But that would have been impossible without Jack. It

was amazing how much his strength of character and his insight had done for her. He had even helped to clarify her problems as a painter. "You're a middlebrow-beater," he had said casually earlier that same day in her studio.

"What's that?" She knew now how to draw him out when he felt like talking.

"Middlebrowbeating is a very cunning technique that has helped some of the best artists of this century. You might call it the modern way to translate the old phrase, *épater le bourgeois*, startle the bourgeois. I didn't even think about these things until I married you, but now I see that it is still absolutely essential today for a good artist to be a middlebrowbeater even when he lives as conservatively as you do. The theory is something like this: the enemy of the artist is not the untutored lowbrow but the half-tutored middlebrow, who knows just enough to be really ignorant but controls most of the money and most of the honours. And the only way to deal with him is: *never* talk his language. Am I way off the beam?"

"No, no, go on."

"Shock him profoundly. Don't reason, don't expound. Bowl him over. Get him to denounce you in his Press. Make *him* come to *you*. Make him creep back for another peep at the enigma you have ingeniously confronted him with. Only by playing upon his appetite for mystery will you get the magic that has protected the artist against arrogant rulers throughout the centuries. But——!"

"But what?"

"But it isn't so simple today. At least for an artist with your appetite for living. It's especially difficult for a woman artist—because of her womb. That little prefix that's been added on to her. Women artists tend to be more conservative than men artists—unless they're childless, they can't give up as much to their specialty. Nature makes them more rounded, more human. Otherwise they become merely weird and distorted. But the odds are that from now on men artists will be imitating women artists, rather than the

other way round. Men artists are probably going to have to become more rounded, more human."

"Why's that?" she asked with a glow of feminine pleasure.

"Did you ever notice that all the really big artists of the twentieth century came of age before 1914? Joyce, Picasso, Proust, Stravinsky, and the others. Tremendous specialisation was still possible then. They weren't much as *men*, perhaps, but as artists they were terrific. The disintegration of modern society was an open secret, but as yet we had had none of the overt calamities that, along with worse effects, have done so much to unsettle our artists' styles. Now, after all that has happened since, no artist can æstheticise his energy the way the pre-1914 generation could. He has too many new problems to face, problems that his predecessors could safely ignore—political, economic, psychological, military, philosophical, religious. Problems like that drain off a lot of collective artistic libido. The artist has to have *so much* scenery in place before he can go into his act. There's considerably less chance now for a work of art to come off. On the other hand, in time, maybe some of our artists will become much more rounded, much more interesting human beings than was necessary before the First World War. They will have to be real men—or real women—first. I think that's the direction art will take. The sick, neurotic specialist will get a quick effectiveness, as usual, but he will also soon burn himself out. Worse, he will cease to be interesting to people who live more deeply than his specialisation permits him to. He will get a neurotic audience but lose a better one."

This touched on a question that had long troubled her. "Well, who *will* make up the better audience?"

"There won't be many in it. There can't. There's been too much upheaval, and art can't expect the patient, joyful attention that it would get in a more peaceful period. Nobody has time for it. Few people really look at a picture any more. You can't live symbolically when so much of your energy must be on tap for more primitive problems. The style of the future will be lightning flashes, and only

those who have their eyes open and their minds alert when the lightning strikes will see what it lights up.

"But this implies being as well as seeing and re-creating. Visual alertness and manual dexterity are no longer enough. In less revolutionary times, yes. Now the painter must be a seer—that is, a be-er as well as a see-er. He can no longer hide in a specialty. He has to become as interesting—yes, and perhaps as strong-willed and as moral, certainly as mature—as anyone else. And for a woman that means babies."

"That's interesting," she said. "More!"

"Some other time." The passion to talk, to question, to explain left him usually as quickly as it came. Now his face had become pallid, and he seemed to be wrestling with a new problem, creature of this latest discussion, and he would not want to talk again until he had worked it out. She knew better than to prod him at such times. Soon afterwards he had left her studio.

For her the time ahead was going to be hard. Maternity would be the supreme test, the heaviest burden she could load on to nerves that had many times demonstrated their unreliability. It would also be the consummation that as a woman she all her life had longed for.

The burden was sure to be increased, she knew as she heard Jack coming downstairs, by the injustice that had so cruelly, so gratuitously been done him. But however heavy it got, it could be carried, and once it was clearly and firmly faced, it would grow lighter. That much she had learned from the war. Meanwhile, the only thing to do was to go on with one's job.

"Well?" she asked when he came into the studio and walked up to her work-bench. "Did you listen to it?" She was hammering some nails no bigger than pins into the back of a chestnut frame that had been stained to look like driftwood.

"Yes." He seemed to say something more, but she could not hear him. She stopped her hammering.

"Well?" she asked again.

"It was an effective speech. He may win after all."

"Really?" She was appalled.

"Yes. He's a fighter, no doubt of that. I think he's taken my best and beaten me. He has a public relations skill that is absolutely satanic. If he's not checked, and others like him, there will be no such thing as democracy. He's the end product of one of the main currents in American life today. In his wretched way he's a genius. I suppose anyone who understands what he's doing, and what harm he is sure to do in the future, ought to drop everything else and just fight him."

This appalled her even more. "You're not going to are you?"

He hesitated. "That's what I've been asking myself. No. I'm not going to. I don't know why, exactly. I hope I've not turned into a defeatist. But I'm not going to."

"You've done everything you could!"

"Oh, there's lots more I could do. But I'm not going to."

She looked up at him, and their eyes met in the light from under the green shade he had rigged up for her.

DANNY GREENUP left the composing-room promptly at twelve-thirty, Tuesday noon, as soon as the single edition of the *Times* went to press. He hoped that nothing had gone wrong; only last week a headline had been set up POLICE MUTS ON MURDER PROBE instead of POLICE MUTE ON MURDER PROBE; and he had just caught it in time. He dismissed the subject from his mind. His father had died young from worrying about such things, but Dena, thank God, had kidded *him* out of taking them too seriously. He had inherited his father's thick wallet full of howlers—'After brief Yuletide services at the Scott Street M.E. Church, sexual intercourse was enjoyed by all', 'Trainer Jerkins denied that he had any intention of scratching Mrs. Whitney's Fluffy Wuffy', 'Youth comes at once if at all', and the others—but he did not give a hoot whether he added one more immortal to the secret archives of news-

papermen. He was so unlike most members of his profession that it meant nothing to him. And nobody ever got fired for a misprint.

But editors *had* been fired for not following orders, and that morning had been marked by an unprecedented event. It was an event of such importance that he was not going to the Rotary Club's weekly luncheon at the American House, where he would have been able to get free drinks and a free meal and a chance to sound out people discreetly on last night's television speech and its consequences; he was going home to talk the whole thing out thoroughly with Dena. For the first time since he had taken over his father's old job Brent Trimble had called him up on the telephone and very quietly told him that he would have to toe the line. Definitely it had been a warning. Hank, angry about the attempted interview at the Barn Dance, might even have urged his uncle to fire him. If so, his retention of the job would depend on Brent's sentimental conservatism: no certain quantity when Hank's more dynamic, more jittery, more Hollywoodish conservatism entered the calculations.

The sweat that had broken out on Danny's forehead during the television speech of the night before was a mere dew compared with the rain that had been washing the whole of his body ever since he had received the telephone call. There seemed to be concrete in his bowels and an alarm clock in his breast. His hip felt like a broken automobile wing. He had seen in an instant his own powerlessness, and it had reminded him of the terrible moment in his childhood when some Protestant boys from Half Moon Street had jumped him, knocked him down, sat on his chest, and made him fear he was going to be smothered to death. This was the way he had to live: unable to breathe a word of his true feelings; forced to write—and also, if he were wise, to speak—as his boss wanted him to. It was a familiar enough condition among the members of his profession, with varying devices for making it tolerable, above all the device congratulating oneself on one's freedom. His own devices had been humour, evasion, silence; and now they

were going to be taken away from him. He wasn't at all sure that he would want to go on living. Dena would have to convince him, as she had done more than once, of the advantages.

"That you, Danny?" Brent had asked, after his secretary had made his connection.

"Yes, Mr. Trimble."

"Danny, I suppose you are printing an account of the speech given last night by the Republican candidate?" He always referred to Hank formally.

"Yes, sir." Danny had of course given it a good position on page one, with a photograph, and lots of space. He had also printed a story about the many favourable comments it had immediately received. Brent would be sure to be pleased with the way it was handled.

"No editorial?"

"No, sir."

"Good. It's better to be a day late with that. Not too fast. There'll be a statement later in the day, I understand, from the chairman of the Republican committee." This was news; a clear tip that Hank was going to be warmly re-endorsed by Brent's stooges. "The response to the speech seems to be very favourable indeed. Is that correct?"

"Yes, sir. *Very* favourable. We're running a news story about it."

"Good. I have every faith in you, Danny. I'm sure you're going to handle every bit of this campaign *perfectly*. But of course, Danny, it must be *perfect*. It looks as if this election may be a little closer than we originally expected. It would be a pity if there were any internal conflicts in the *Times* about the importance of a Republican victory. Do you agree with me?"

"Oh yes, sir!"

"Good. Good! I knew you would. I wouldn't hesitate to suggest resignation to anyone who didn't agree with me about this, because I consider it a matter of the utmost importance. But I'm sure there'll be no need for that."

"Oh no, sir!"



"Good-bye, Danny. Why don't you come to my office at say four forty-five, and we'll talk about the latest developments."

"Yes, sir. I'll be there. Four forty-five."

Danny's first discovery after the conversation was that Brent was much more emotionally involved in Hank's election than he had thought possible of such a cool one. Brent felt like a father to the boy, and might be capable of a father's unpredictability. Danny's second discovery was the effect of the conversation upon himself. Sweat had broken out all over him. He wanted desperately to hang on to his job.

He was still every bit as nervous when he put the paper to bed, said 'So long' to the typesetters, left the composing-room, grabbed his brown hat with the hole in it, and started towards his car on Main Street. And he was in no mood at all to see Vern Brettschneider, the C.I.O. man, although the first words Vern uttered made it clear that he had come looking for him. It was unfair that the tacit instructions he had just received from Brent should have to be put to a test so soon.

"Danny!" Vern cried cheerfully. "I'm glad I caught you! Say, I want to ask you a question."

"Can you do it later, fellow? I'm in a hurry!"

"Won't take but a second. Say, I thought you told me Jack Trimble was O.K."

"I've really got to run!" It wouldn't even be safe to be seen *talking* to one of the leading supporters of the Democratic candidate until after Election Day.

"Is he O.K. or isn't he?" Vern walked right along with him as he went as fast as his bum hip allowed him to his car.

Danny looked around before he answered. No one appeared to be paying any attention to them. "Sure, he's O.K.," he said briefly.

"Then why doesn't he act like it? The only way he can stop that smear is to get up in front of people and *show* 'em he's not that kind of a guy. He's got to fight!" Vern's blond head bobbed with admirable vigour.

Danny was interested. "Isn't he going to?" The news didn't surprise him, but he liked adding it to his store of hard facts.

"No! I called him up today, and he gave me a run-around. Says he's done all he's going to do about the election. Fat lot *he's* done!"

"I guess he figures the best defence is silence."

"Silence never won any elections."

"After all he's not running."

"Oh yes, he is! If he doesn't see to it that his son gets licked, his name will be mud around here. He's got a bigger stake in this than——"

A yellow cab stopped near Danny's car, a window opened, and Rudenko leaned forward on the back seat and called out, "Good-bye! Good-bye! So I was watching the end of a promising political career, was I? He isn't going to go to Congress, is he? How much do you want to bet?" He had a suitcase on the seat with him. He was probably going to the airport to catch the one-twenty plane to New York.

"I never bet against my own candidate," Danny hedged. If Rudenko had been getting as close to Brent Trimble as town gossip said he was, it wouldn't pay to give him *anything* to carry back. The cab was coming from the direction of the factory; he might even have been in Brent's office at the time of the telephone call. Both Rudenko and Hank might have been talking against Danny to Brent.

"Oho! So he's your candidate now?"

"Always was," Danny insisted stoutly.

"Well, glad to hear it. Always pays to be on the winning side. Never bet against the house. Good-bye, good-bye!" The cab carried the jubilant Rudenko away.

"Are you really for Hank Trimble—*yourself*?" Vern asked incredulously.

"Of course I am. Didn't you know it?"

"I sure as hell didn't. I never would have guessed it," Vern said scornfully. "Well, so long." He didn't have any more questions to ask.

SUE was glad to be back in New York. She had left Trimble sooner than she expected, sooner than her doctor wanted her to, but she didn't regret it. Now she would never go back again until either her mother or her father died, and she wished them both a long life. The timing and manner of her departure had not been exactly to her liking, and yet, under the circumstances, there had not been anything else she could do. To safeguard her reason she had had to call up and charter a plane. Two days longer in Trimble and she would *not* have been responsible for her behaviour. In two days the election would be over, and everything much calmer, but meanwhile she would have gone nuts.

The driver of the long black Cadillac that brought her from LaGuardia Field to Manhattan looked surprised at the small hotel, one flight up over a Chinese laundry, and located in a business district near Greenwich Village, where she directed him to take her and the small French bag, no bigger than a make-up kit, that was all she had had time to pack. The name of the hotel, on the tattered, cigarette-burnt awning which rose diagonally from street level to the vestibule where the hotel began, was the Saint Rocco. But Cairo Thornton had praised it highly to her as exactly the type of hotel he liked best, and she was in no mood to go, as she usually did, to the Plaza. She wanted something stark and if possible, as the playwright had promised, sinister. She also hoped that the playwright would be staying there. She wanted to go on with a discussion of dancing and love that had been interrupted a couple of weeks before at Augusta's.

He was not staying there, but the manager of the Saint Rocco, who was also its room clerk, switchboard operator, and bellhop, remembered him. "Oh yes," he said, "him." The manager looked startled when she told him that she wanted a suite of at least three rooms. "Only got doubles,"

he said, "singles and doubles. You want double? Your husband coming to meet you?"

"No," she said, "I'm not married." Finally she got a double and single room, with the door thrown open between them, that faced on the street, where there seemed to be an altercation between truck-drivers who were unloading large bales of paper from a near-by warehouse. There were loud words and louder honkings. The manager's pig-like body—he wore soup-stained black—bent low when she gave him a dollar tip. It was the first indication she had received that he was not a hibernating animal in a state of torpor.

She pushed a chair near a window and looked out. The sky was grey, the air beginning to get raw. Night was coming on. The light coat she had brought with her would not be enough. Tomorrow she would go up to 57th Street and buy a few things. She was happy. She had no associations at all with this place. The furniture was not overstuffed, and *no* decorator would ever have approved of it. She was *glad* the sheets on one of the beds had not been changed: that was where she would sleep. The shouting outside was healthy and, in its way, noble. It stimulated her. She felt as if she had escaped from a posh gas-chamber into a robust, epic, lovable market-place. If only there would be a shooting. At times she had also been stimulated by the noises of the battery plant back home, but that belonged to her father, and of course she had always had to get away from it. Now its only meaning to her was the money that it had earned for her Uncle Spence, that he had left to her, that enabled her to break completely with her family's way of life. A million wasn't much any more, but she had had the bank put it into a fund that required no attention at all, and she would find some way to get along on it, even if nothing more came from her father.

When the shouting died down she tossed a lighted cigarette out the window, hoping that it would land on somebody's neck and start up another wonderful uproar, but she missed, and now it was really getting dark and she

had better begin to think of what she was going to do that evening. She had wired Eugene Rudenko of course, but perhaps he was out of town, or the message hadn't been delivered. She'd better check.

It pleased her to take her time about telephoning him. She was savouring the freedom of choice that had come with escape to New York. In Trimble she had felt like a prisoner, obliged to share the sufferings of Uncle Jack and Augusta and the satisfactions of her mother and father, no matter how much she wanted to wash her hands of all of them. At last, as she had known all along, the illustrious John Peyton Trimble had been pulled off his pedestal and made a laughing-stock; ancient resentments had been satisfied; a star had been shot down; the small town mind had triumphed. Her best efforts had been in vain. More surprising than anything else had been her father's willingness to believe the absurd gossip about her uncle; she had known he was stuffy, but he had never before been unjust—or so stubborn about his injustice. Their mother's plain preference for Uncle Jack, in their boyhood, must still be galling an old cut. Sue had been prepared for the gleeful malice of her mother and the sorrowful malice of Hank, but she had expected something better of her father, who usually behaved with exceptional dignity, on the whole. Now she wanted to see nothing more of him or, for that matter, of Uncle Jack or Augusta.

They also had disappointed her. They should have fought the gossip openly. Augusta had been entirely wrong in discouraging Uncle Jack from taking an active part in the election campaign. People like a fighter. One look at Uncle Jack on a political platform, especially since he was a brilliant speaker and knew so well how to get people laughing with him, and the gossip would have died out. He might even have made it boomerang against Hank, who was really dreadful. But Augusta wanted Uncle Jack to ignore the whole thing and she had hypnotised him. What had happened to the admirable Machiavellism that had outwitted his wives and beaten the Russians at their own game? Now he was no longer *dynamic* enough to hold his niece's

imagination. When Sue had offered him money to keep up his payments on the house he had thanked her but declined. "Somehow or other we'll get by," he had said, "but thanks just the same. It's very sweet of you." He hadn't let her *do* anything for him, and she had felt hurt. Augusta also had said there was nothing she could *do* for her. Finally their calm had given her the willies, and she had had to get away from them.

Of course if any serious injury ever threatened them, she would fight to the death for them, but only from a distance. They had become too hard to take. Actually, the injury done Uncle Jack was already serious, if it prevented him from getting any of the jobs he would soon be needing, but apparently he refused to worry about it. Then he couldn't expect anyone else to worry about it!

When she finally called Eugene he sounded very glad to hear from her and perhaps a little worried that he hadn't heard from her sooner.

"I'll come right over!" he said authoritarily. "Where? Never heard of it! My God, that's the flop-house district. Why did you ever—oh well, I'll get you out of there. Have your bags packed. I'll call the Plaza and book a suite for you. Now, now, be reasonable. You just *can't*, that's all."

If he really was a fortune-hunter, as everyone except her father believed, he certainly was talking as if he already were her husband. It would be fun finding out. She'd make him take her to some dive in Macdougall Street. She was *not* going to eat in the Oak Room. And she was not going to leave the Saint Rocco. Meanwhile she would be testing him, making believe she had much more money than she really did have, faking an interest in book-publishing that she didn't feel at all. One of her big moments had been the look of bewilderment on Lord Stretton's face when she had given the signal and the two men following them in another car had forced his rented Rolls-Royce off the highway near Wraybury, pulled him out, told his rented chauffeur to shut up, and then taken her back to her hotel in London. She had given the signal as soon as Lord Stretton, who

obviously didn't care two hoots for her but did want her money very much, had taken her hand on the back seat and squeezed it. She'd taught him a thing or two! The look on his lean greyhound face had been priceless.

There was a smell of sea air and soot, together with the smoke of the flask of Scotch that she had remembered to put into her bag, which was unmistakably New York. She loved it. The lights that had come on in the towers of lower Manhattan were so perfect that she might have been looking at a toy, not a city. Ferry-boats played the woodwinds in a toy symphony. If only she had brought along a portable gramophone! And a record or two. She felt like dancing.

45

EVERY star in the Milky Way seemed visible on election night, while the ballots were being counted and Jack dragged a large dead oak-branch, lately blown down by a storm, on to the woodland path that led to his house, and put on top of it a sign he had just painted: Road Closed. The cool clear air that, with the flatness of the land, made it possible to see some of the low-lying constellations of the zodiac was busy, no doubt, carrying the early election returns, but neither he nor Augusta would hear them. Shortly after they came home from the polling place he had turned off the radio, after listening to a weather report, and he was not going to turn it on again until morning. He had also taken a telephone receiver off its hook, which meant that there would be no calls that night, no matter how often anyone—and he especially feared Danny—tried to reach him.

The roadblock was his final precaution, and he walked back towards the house, which was about a quarter of a mile away. The light in Augusta's studio meant that she was framing, and would not mind an interruption, but he felt like getting back to his desk, which better than anything else would serve to shut out the clamour of events. The poet Valéry had called them the foam on the top of the sea,

and recently they had re-convinced Jack that his own interests were submarine. Tomorrow morning he would turn on the news, and adjust himself promptly to whatever good fortune or ill fortune it brought. That was all the attention he chose to give it. Now he was more interested in the silence of the sky, which reminded him of his years in New Mexico, unquestionably the least troubled of his life. If only he had been able to go on with them! But the war had come, and he had found that he could not devote himself completely, at least not then, to the intellectual life that he already was beginning to prefer to business and politics. Temperament, talent, and the history of his people had decided otherwise. His age had also been a factor. Like Arjuna in the *Bhagavad-Gita*, he had finally been convinced that it was his sacred duty to fight.

Now, a decade later, he was paying the price of his regrettable but inescapable talent for making himself conspicuous. If he had been content with a lowly rank in the Army, and if after the war he had managed to avoid any rank at all, his present predicament would not exist. He could have gone back, quite simply, to the South-Western desert. He was justly treated, no matter what any sentimental sympathisers might believe. But actually he didn't regret what he had done.

There probably had been childish vanity in his wish for a *big* job. Oh yes, he'd loved it all! Including the fuss made over him. Patriots would say that if he had committed an error it had been not to go on giving the very best in him to his country, and that he should not take too seriously the honours that had gone with his responsibilities; but he had explored that fallacy, which in the name of a political emergency that was never lacking delivered the individual perennially to be a servant of the state. The well would never run dry of enemies that justified every retreat from the mind; when Germans and Japanese had exhausted their usefulness—that is, been conquered—their place was taken quickly by Russians and Chinese. And always the latest enemy seemed the last.



Tribal struggles of that sort were inevitable, and right, for younger men. At his age the fight, unless one were evasive, was with oneself. At least he *thought* so. The bequest of inwardness he had received from his mother was considerably larger than he had realised during his first four decades or so. So much larger that he had never once really regretted the abrupt amputation of his economic and military and political activities. Her dilettantish flirtation with the mind, her cultism, her Buddhism, was being turned into a genuine love affair that, if he worked hard enough, if he despised his difficulties enough, and if he had not started too late, might beget some worthy intellectual children. And perhaps some worthy actions too. She would surely have been the first to approve a sacrifice such as she had not made herself, especially if it brought forth good books. All along she had wanted him to be a writer, at the same time that she had carefully guarded his social position, during their poverty, and guided him toward a lucrative profession and a socially advantageous marriage. She had died without realising that in promoting her worldly ambitions for him she had also done everything in her power to frustrate the deeper desires of a mother's heart. And so for a long time he too had been divided.

Now the clarifications of long and painful experience, together with the rigorous, exciting example of Augusta, had finally brought him face to face with the need of wholeness. And he so much wanted self-unity that the recent hardships worked on him by his son seemed benefactions in disguise—the more outrageous, the more useful. This time he was not going to turn away from the lesson that perhaps could teach him most. He had made a seemingly adroit re-entry into politics, and it had quickly proved to be anything but that. Now, at last, he was going to receive the instruction that Nature had prepared for him. He had climbed on her operating table and bared himself to her knife.

When he reached the house, and went quietly to his study on the first floor, the task that awaited him made him quickly forget the contemporary event that he was so care-

fully shutting out. That night his task did not concern his own book, but a review of another man's book, a first-hand report on slave-labour conditions in the Soviet Union, which he had been commissioned to write for a small-circulation magazine in New York that had already printed a chapter of his book under the title, *The Intellectual in Politics*. Now he addressed himself to the final two paragraphs of his review, which had been describing conditions in a logging-camp near Archangel where there was an eleven-to-twenty-hour workday and planned starvation. He wrote with his usual slowness:

A typical eyewitness incident in the book is the murder of an ex-N.K.V.D. officer by prisoners who realised that he was being deliberately thrown to them. A typical description is nightfall in the camp hospital, where the dying are especially disturbed by the anonymity of their death: no word will be sent their relatives; they will be simply forgotten. Typical characters are a shy woman serving a ten-year sentence because she had lived near a railroad sold to the Japanese (all people in that territory received the same sentence) and an engineer, ordered officially to study French, who fell so much in love with France, through books, that he made invidious comparisons with the Soviet, was imprisoned, and finally scalded himself to death rather than work any more for his masters.

*None of these horrors would have been possible without the assent of a great many people.* Historically Russia is nearer the single-mindedness of theocracy than any Western state. Culturally and psychologically this means millions of submissive citizens prepared to overlook any monstrosity if only their appetite for faith is satisfied: a situation delightful to ideological rulers. The Russian intensity, or *doukh*, which was so admirable in ballet, theatre, music, and literature, is apparently not yet suited to the prosaic arts of justice and government; and when Lenin said it would be welded harmlessly, even creatively, to technology, he made the same naïve mistake, born of administrative innocence and revolu-

tionary optimism, to which many ex-Communists, though disillusioned with Stalin, still cling. His great work had the grim effect of setting the stage for ruthless masters such as seem always to come to power in times of violent upheaval. But these after-the-event reflections should bring no partisan joy to anti-Stalinists; they merely indicate the complexity of the task that confronts us all.

He finished the review at a little after ten o'clock, and was immediately tempted to turn on the radio, to see how the election was going. When he had typed out the phrase 'appetite for faith' he had thought of the Americans, the Ohioans of his own community who might be led by the same hunger to overlook the manifest absurdity of Hank's self-defence and vote for him. Their will to believe in him, in anyone who spoke to them with conviction and in the mind-lulling language they liked to hear, was so strong that they might very possibly fall for him. They liked to think otherwise, but they were no less easy prey than the Russians. They *did*, however, have elections. The lights of the town were shining more brightly than usual, automobile horns were honking in the distance, and he wanted to know which way the vote was going.

He walked past the radio without turning it on. Tomorrow would be time enough. About this hour Augusta usually stopped her work, and they had a cup of tea together and went to bed. He slipped down to her studio.

"Who's ahead?" she asked as soon as he appeared.

"I don't know," he said, and they both smiled.

THE best thing about the restaurant, to Cairo Thornton, was that he had never mentioned it to any of his friends. On that night of all nights he wanted to be alone. And since they knew him and appreciated his five-dollar tips they let him have a drink—in a teacup! just like Prohibition days!—although it was election night and no liquor was supposed

to be served while the polls were open and New Yorkers were deciding who would be their next Governor, their next Senator, their next Mayor. The only drink possible was *arag*, which tasted like anisette, but when a little water and ice had made it milky it wasn't bad. Quite smooth in fact, and it went well with the chilled artichoke and the mint-flavoured cold soup that he always began his meal with there. When his nerves were shot nothing made him feel calm so quickly as a quiet Armenian meal in a place that was still too dumb, thank God, to know how to get publicity. Also, it had a good effect on his easily upset lower region. Almost as good as paregoric. If anything would get the river-boats going again in his brain, it was *shish kebab*.

The ceiling of the restaurant looked like a huge tin waffle on which had been poured, not molasses, but buff-coloured paint. The tan walls were covered with exact copies of old sepia postcards of Armenia before the Massacre—so exact that the hand of the muralist had reproduced not only each majestic mountain-slope, each lonely cataract, each deserted field, but also the tiny crescents at the four corners of each postcard where it had been fitted into an album. Blessed literalness that kept the boss still in the kitchen, in his sixties, sticking skewers into lambs, and his wife, now a great-grandmother, behind the 1909 cash register! Most of their business came at the lunch-hour, from the wholesale district that surrounded them. Tonight only four other tables were occupied—by brutal-faced bosses with brutal-faced secretaries; though one of the couples could have been married. The scene was almost sordid enough to be interesting.

But he couldn't enter into it, he couldn't take any notes, written or mental. He had had a shattering experience. He had seen a ghost that evening—and a sneak preview of his own old age. It was already dark when he left his agent's office, after a long discussion of a Hollywood contract to do the screen adaptation of his own *White Columns*—he was not going to back down on a single one of the things he wanted—and he walked on Broadway towards the stand on Times Square where out-of-town newspapers were sold, to get a

copy of the *Trimble Times*—he had been reading it regularly the past two weeks, and he had got more ideas from it for *The Tender Web* than he had got from his visit to Trimble—when he thought he saw a familiar face.

It was old 'Prof' MacMillan, who had once taught music in Cairo, Illinois, and must be seventy if he was a day. Was the colour on his cheeks real, or was he now making himself up? He looked youthful, even jaunty, despite his portliness, as he slowly prowled round Times Square, in a new light-grey felt hat and a sporty tweed topcoat. It was still the place where out-of-town homosexuals hastened, as soon as they arrived at Penn station or the Grand Central, or the bus terminals, to find the companionship they could not find in the provinces. It was also the place where there were sure to be blackmailers and detectives, on the look-out for the same adventures for different reasons. And Prof knew this, for he had once been arrested in the men's room of the 14th Street subway station.

About twenty years earlier he had been chased out of Cairo, Illinois, by the American Legion, when some fat boy, not very good at the piano, had said that he had made advances to him. Prof was over fifty then, and had come to New York with his wife and his daughter, taken an apartment in Washington Heights, and started all over again. It was a lot like the famous story 'Hands' in Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio*, except that in Prof's case there had never been any doubt of his guilt. It was something that Cairo Thornton *knew* about, because he had been one of Prof's pupils too, only *he* had not talked. And now the sight of the grotesquely dashing old beau, who had been his first lover, who had told him about Tchaikovsky's secret—and said that the same thing must unquestionably be true of Jesus and Shakespeare, and that it must never be considered a disease or a vice, because it had been the private distinction of many great men—now the sight of this old *fool*, so eager for excitement that he would risk disgrace, beating, and prison for it, made him wonder if he was not looking also at himself, some thirty-five years later, when he too would feel

he must extend his youth right up to the edge of the grave. Oh no! In his case it would be *much* worse. He had risen so much higher in the world than poor old Prof. Old age for him would be unbearable. And even more undignified.

He bought a copy of the Trimble paper and, shielding his face with it, hurried away into a taxicab. If the old man had recognised and hailed him, he would have screamed obscenities and run. He was *not* going to end up like that! But how avoid it? The realism that made him a good playwright also obliged him to admit that nothing in his present behaviour suggested he would ever discontinue habits that he considered neither vicious nor diseased. And if he didn't, what chance had he to mellow gracefully, to end his war with the 'normality' that had made him suffer so many times? Certain homosexuals had done it, he knew, and lived with unobtrusive indifference to social conventions, but he honestly didn't believe he could. His escorted departure from his old home town had alarmed him frightfully, and made him fear that some day he would land in a real scandal. He had started reading the Trimble paper to see if he had got into the news.

He didn't go to the beautiful garden apartment in the East 60s that he had rented for the season, because too many friends would surely be there. They came every night. Fearing loneliness, and knowing that he could clear the place whenever he wanted, he had passed out keys to several of them. Let them wait there, drink his liquor, and, as happened all too often, scratch his records and steal his books. He didn't care. He wanted to be alone, and fortunately remembered the Armenian restaurant not far from the Saint Rocco hotel that he had had the good sense to keep to himself. There, in the restaurant, he would slowly recover from the shock that Prof had given him. After two teacups of *arag* he actually began to feel better.

"It is so him!" said a woman's voice.

"I guess you're right," said a man's.

Two people had entered the restaurant and were advancing towards him. He had seen them somewhere recently,

he realised in a fury, and there was no way to escape them.

"Mr. Thornton!" said the woman.

"Hello," said the man.

He rose to his feet and shook hands with them reluctantly.

"We were just passing by," said the woman.

"I didn't know there were any restaurants here," said the man.

"Let's eat here!" said the woman.

"Oh no!" said the man. "Last night she wanted to eat on Macdougall Street, and tonight——!"

"Do you mind?" said the woman, sitting down.

"No," said Cairo Thornton feebly, stupidly. She looked as if she were used to having her way, and tonight he lacked the energy to resist her. The man with her also sat down. Of course! It was Eugene Rudenko.

"Look!" said the woman, "he's got the Trimble paper!"

"It's terrible!" said Rudenko.

"Are you reading up on the campaign?" asked the woman.

"What campaign?"

"The election campaign!"

"No." He always skipped any reference to politics, the way other people skipped poetry in novels.

"I wouldn't be surprised if you did. After what you did to it!"

"What *I* did to it?"

"Yes, you!" She seemed annoyed.

"I didn't have anything to do with it."

"She means your journal," said Rudenko.

"My journal?"

"Yes! The diary you kept of your trip to Rome. Your visit to Santayana—and all the rest." Rudenko grinned lewdly.

"I don't know what you're talking about!" The time had come to be very firm with both of them, and he felt his energy, which the encounter with Prof had drained astonishingly, about to return in full vigour.

"Oh yes, you do," said the woman.

"I assure you I don't!"

"Do you mean to sit there and tell me you don't know what was done with your journal?"

"I don't even know what you're talking about. I don't keep a journal." He'd better make that clear from the start.

"But I've read it. I mean, a photostatic copy of it."

"You couldn't have. It's impossible."

"I get it!" said Rudenko. "They took the journal from your room while you were out, photographed it, and then returned it. You never knew what had happened. And then the next day they ran you out of town. It's simple!"

"Who ran me out of town?" Cairo Thornton protested. "What are you talking about? What town?"

"Oh, now come!" said the woman.

"I don't know what you're talking about!"

"You don't? Well, I'll tell you!" she said with astonishing female aggressiveness. "Your filthy little diary or journal or whatever you want to call it—letter to one of your boy friends—was used against my uncle. Just because he had the misfortune to entertain y—— Oh, I give up! Why, he didn't even invite you!"

"What uncle? I don't know *what* you're talking about!"

"I give up! Let's get out of here!" She rose as suddenly as she had sat down. "Two minutes more and I'd be throwing things at him!"

"Yes! Let's get out of here! I didn't want to come here in the first place," said Rudenko, who seemed to be in fear of her temper.

"Good-bye, Mr. Thornton!" she said acidly. "Just think, he pretends he doesn't know anything about it!"

"But he doesn't!" said Rudenko.

"You'll never make me believe that!"

"He doesn't!"

"Good-bye, Mr. Thornton!" she said again, and walked towards the door.



“Good-bye,” said Rudenko more genially, and followed after her.

When they left, Cairo Thornton felt worse than when he had first come to the restaurant. Incomprehensible accusations had been made against him, and much time would be required before he could erase them from his mind. The woman had looked at him as if he were a moral leper. Was it always going to be like that? Was he never going to get the sympathy, the imagination that he gave so freely to others when he wrote about them? Was he going to live for ever beyond the pale of accepted social decencies? He thought he had made his peace long ago with that article of the American faith. Tonight he felt like a boy again and wanted to weep. It was so unjust. There just wasn't much love in the world. He gave it—freely, abundantly, with all the art at his command—but he didn't get it. Humanitarians spoke up boldly for the black man, the red man, the yellow man, and even for the killer man; they said never a word for his kind of man. *That* was too disgraceful. Precisely, of course, because there was so much of it in them, of the tender, the feminine, the sensual, the unpredictable, irrational, mad, woolly, shapeless, compassionate. Because they feared what all this would do to the state. It was the old dread of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all young, vigorous, growing societies felt it. Their puritanism was their safeguard against destruction. Also against life.

He was just 'normal' enough to know that it had to be. And just 'queer' enough to hate it. How bitter that the people who had produced Walt Whitman, the people whose greatest poet chanted openly homosexual love songs, should now be such worshippers of the state that any errant impulse of the individual—and what were individuals but errant impulses or, as Emerson had called them 'mutually repellent particles'?—could not be tolerated!

He knew one thing for sure: as soon as the new play permitted, he would go back to Italy, to Rome. Back to the sunny aquarium. Back to the only solace.

**I**T was a fair Sunday morning, with a blue sky, a bright sun, and just enough frost in the air to make Brent glad that he came of New England stock and rejoiced in northerly trials. They wouldn't coax him to Florida that winter. His post of duty was amid snow and ice, and he loved the hardening it required. He didn't even feel happy when he crossed the Mason-Dixon Line—that is, the Ohio River—into Kentucky, on occasional hunting trips, although the temperature was exactly the same.

The river looked greenish-brown and low; there hadn't been much rain lately. He saw it in the distance, below the town, when he came out of church through a trim sandstone ogive—designs for the new building had been submitted to him, and he had chosen Gothic—with Marge on his arm, hymnal thunder in his ears, and thanksgiving in his heart. People stepped aside, as usual, with special deference, to make way for them, or, if they were friends, went out of their way to greet them. Personally he didn't want it that way, and would have preferred not to be noticed at all, but it meant a great deal to Marge, and if it pacified her and gave others pleasure, it could certainly do no harm. It had been a wrench for him to desert the Congregational Church for the Episcopal at the time of his wedding, and he had never actually intended to, because of course his great-grandfather, the founder, had been a Congregationalist minister, but if the truth were told he was happier in his new place of worship. Marge would have gone nowhere else, and it was good for them to go together. Also, the town had changed, and more of the people of their class, more of their natural friends and allies, were now Episcopalians. And it wasn't as if he had stopped his contributions to the Congregationalists.

He felt good. Better than he had felt in a long time. At last the current of history was flowing again in the direction he believed in. His faith in the American people had been

justified. In two years he had hope that he would be able to deliver the speech that had been prepared for him in 1948. The election that year, with its astonishing results, had prevented him from delivering it. But two years hence, in 1952, he saw himself before a distinguished audience of industrial leaders, in black ties, with cigars in their hands, and saying to them practically the same words:

Not so long ago, at the depth of the Depression, the American businessman was an outcast, a pariah, a villain. In the public's mind he was pretty close to the lowest rung on the ladder of prestige. He was generally considered the lowest form of economic life. It was claimed that since he ran his business solely for private profit—imagine that!—he could never be trusted to run it for the good of everyone. It was claimed that what helped him must surely harm the country. And everybody agreed that he should be tied down with controls, regulations, and red tape.

If he had not played such a prominent part in winning the war, if American industry had not been called upon to out-produce all the other nations put together, and if it had not actually done just that, I am quite sure that our whole system of free enterprise would have been swamped by socialism.

It wasn't. Sober realisation of what American industry had done in the war made people understand at last the value of wise industrial leadership.

Today industrial management is winning back the confidence of the American people. The right to manage its own affairs is being restored to it—slowly—and some of its leading figures are being called into the government. But all this new prestige means, of course, new responsibilities, and personally I have never yet met a real industrial leader who is not profoundly aware of them.

The will of the people, as the recent election has shown, has been made abundantly clear. They want their govern-

ment run in a businesslike way, and they want business run in the long-range interest of the country. This means——

He knew it almost by heart; none of his speeches had ever sprung so spontaneously from the faith that had kept him on the job, through all kinds of discouragement, change, strife, crisis, for over forty years. He had dictated almost all of it himself; there had had to be only a few minor changes of wording, for greater effectiveness. It made him feel good to pass the familiar words through his mind again. Some day he would be able to say them in public, and then it would be literally true that he could die in peace. He would have accomplished a task that was neither personal nor political, but moral and religious.

Marge would have been happier if there had been a chauffeur in black waiting for them, with the door to the back seat open, or if their car had been new. He had never consented to a chauffeur, and he believed that a car could and should be made to last about fifteen years. At that hour, each Sunday, he felt her criticism, even when she did not speak it, but he knew he was right, and as long as he was alive he would not give in on either point.

He would take her home and hurry out to the golf course. Dinner would be served in the evening. There would be a lot of guests: just what she needed to keep her mind off herself.

"Stop at the news-stand, Baba," she reminded him. "I want to get the magazine."

"Oh yes, Mother." He had forgotten. She wanted to buy a copy of *Vogue*, which was said by a disagreeable friend to contain an article about Augusta's house, with photographs, and to refer to Augusta as 'Mrs. Trimble of Trimble'. She had wanted to buy it before they went to church, but he had deliberately forgotten it then, and driven past the news-stand, for fear the article might put her into a pet that would be noticeable at worship. Now she could take it home with her and discharge her wrath at the servants.

He would be out playing golf, and he would take care to come home late.

As soon as he arrived at the news-stand he knew that Jack was there, because he recognised his grey Ford. On the whole it might be a good thing that they were forced to meet each other in public. They hadn't seen each other since the night at Jack's, a few weeks before, when things began to come to a head. But Brent had been thinking a great deal about his brother, and would be glad of a chance to talk to him. On the day after election day he had become convinced that the gossip about Jack was untrue, and now, if possible, he wanted to assure him that he didn't believe it. The things had been on his conscience, in a sort of way.

There was no need at all for any disagreement between them. In a few minutes everything could be settled amicably, the way things ought to be settled. It would be particularly pleasant to straighten things out today, when he was just coming home from church. He felt well disposed toward everyone. He had reconciled himself to Jack's staying in Trimble, now that the offer from Washington had been withdrawn and now that it began to appear, according to the bank, that Jack's financial position was not as weak as had been supposed. Therefore all the more reason to bury the hatchet.

"Hello!" Brent cried genially, and when his brother turned round, took his hand. He realised that he had a selling job to do. "I see you're getting the same thing I want!" He pointed to a copy of *Vogue* under Jack's arm. "I'll take one too," he told the proprietor of the stand, who said anxiously, "I'll see if we've got another, Mr. Trimble!"

"Hello," said Jack, shaking hands with him. It was a good sign; Brent had feared there might be aloofness, even in public.

"How have you been?" Brent asked warmly.

"All right. And you?" Jack was wearing old grey trousers, a blue flannel shirt, and a well-worn tweed jacket. He didn't go to church.

"Fine! Fine! And Augusta?"

"Oh, very well. How's Marge?"

"Sitting over there in the car. We hope you're coming tonight."

"Tonight?"

"Didn't Augusta tell you? You know, the party for——"

"There is a copy, Mr. Trimble," said the proprietor. "It got a little mused, but——"

"That's all right," said Brent, paying him, taking the magazine, and also drawing Jack away from some townspeople who were putting themselves to a lot of trouble to listen to every word that passed between the two prominent brothers. Now they stood on the kerb, out of earshot, and Brent continued, quietly, "It's a party we're giving for Hank. Just a few friends. We'd particularly like to have you and Augusta there. So would he."

"Oh, that," said Jack. "No, I'm afraid we can't come. I thought Augusta told you."

"I called her back myself, to get you to reconsider. Come on! Let's bury the hatchet!"

"There isn't any hatchet. There never was, between you and me. So we don't have to——"

"I'm thinking of Hank. That boy's going to Washington. He's on the threshold of a big career. He needs your blessing, Jack."

"I'm afraid he'll have to go without it."

"Oh, come on! Don't be like that! Give him your blessing. All right, put it this way: forgive him. Maybe he's done a few things that he has to be forgiven. So have you. If it hadn't been for the things you did first, maybe—— You'll feel a lot better if you do!"

"I can forgive him, but——"

"Incidentally, I never believed any of those things they were saying about you. Why, a person has only to take a good look at you to——!"

"You didn't? I got the impression from Sue that you did."

"Oh well, maybe for a few days, when everything seemed confused. But later I realised there wasn't any truth in them."

"Well, I'm glad of that, anyway. Thank you for telling me."

"We'll be counting on you tonight! Seven-thirty."

"I won't be there."

"Oh, come on! You'll feel a lot better."

But it was no use, and Brent finally had to leave without having been able to arrange the public reconciliation that he now wanted very much. His selling job had not worked this time, but he was not going to stop trying. If Jack was going to stay in Trimble, it was important that there be no more bad feeling between them. Health alone demanded it, not to mention conscience. It was also important that Jack give his public approval to Hank; it would do a lot to calm the boy down. Actually there wasn't any difference between them that couldn't be worked out. For that matter there wasn't any difference between any people, anywhere, that couldn't be worked out. Even the Russians—if there were only a chance to by-pass their leaders and deal directly with the people, in no time at all there would be no cold war! There was no such thing as an insoluble conflict. If you could just get people to sit down and *see their own interests*, there would be no more fighting.

Marge was waiting for him. He realised at once that she was in a very bad humour. "What did you talk so much about? Give it to me! Let me see it!" And when she found the article, and saw that it described Augusta as 'Mrs. Trimble of Trimble', she was really fit to be tied.

ANY other time Danny would have liked being invited to the Brent Trimbles' party. It was the first time he had ever been asked inside their house. He was curious to see how they lived, and he also believed that his invitation meant a vote of confidence and a kind of promotion. He had been considered worthy of a glimpse of the wheels within wheels. It was an honour that had never once been extended to his father. He wished, as he took off its hanger the Brooks

Brothers dinner jacket that he had worn more often in his carefree days as a *Mademoiselle* husband, and scanned it for tightness and moth-holes, that he could enjoy the occasion, which meant a social step forward for his entire tribe. One consequence of this evening would be the increased hopscotch prestige, in the eyes of their playmates, of his son and his daughter. They would soon be wanting to go to fashionable schools where the drinking began a few months ahead of time, and somehow Dena would manage it. His dad's holey flannel underwear on the backyard line, his personal symbol of disgrace, was being expunged from the record. The poor old battered Greenups were coming up in the world. He could forget about his dad's drinking, his ma's brogue, and his own early terror of bill collectors. There *was* such a thing as a way forward into the warm sunlight of neighbourly approval, and at last he had found it. All he had to do now was keep on the beam.

Was that why he wanted to crack skulls and smash jaws? Nothing harder than keeping on the beam, and yet he went on doing it, day after day, and astounding himself. Surely a brain fuse would blow some day. Surely it wasn't possible to be as steady as the Protestants, even if he rarely went to mass any more and let his kids attend Sunday school with the Methodists.

And yet he now gave such an impression of steadiness that people forgot, simply forgot, his earlier irresponsibility. He had learned it from Rosemary Bauer in a manner so bizarre that it was doubly convincing. He had been on his way down the spittooned corridors of the City Hall towards the Mayor's office, to have a showdown about police graft before he wrote a new editorial called *Fingers in the Cookie Jar*, when he saw Rosemary, between a cop and the house dick at the hotel, about to pass under the green light that marked the entrance to police headquarters.

"Rosemary!" he said. "What are you doing here?"

"I'll be out in a few minutes," she insisted.

"What happened?"

"Let's say she wanted to stay with us a little too long,"



said the house dick, who was holding grimly on to her arm.

"Just let me call my lawyer," Rosemary pleaded.

"And didn't mind what she did to pay the bill," the house dick continued. This was a little surprising; Danny had seen her several times in the bar at the American House since the departure of Rudenko, and once or twice her drinking companion had been the same detective who now denounced her. Perhaps he had objected to some of her other companions, or the management had decided she was becoming a nuisance. "And that ain't all," the house dick said. "This morning she damn near burnt down the place."

"Smoking in bed?"

"Now, now, don't print anything. No damage done. Or not much. We didn't even call the fire department."

"You'll tell 'em I'm O.K., won't you, Mr. Greenup?" Rosemary pleaded.

"Sure, Rosemary, sure I will," Danny had promised, and afterwards he had spoken to the judge who in due time would get her case. There wasn't much point, after all, in sending her to jail when there was a child at home that she ought to be looking after. It was fairly routine, and the judge had more or less agreed with him, though deciding that she shouldn't go back to the hotel any more. What had surprised Danny was her appeal to him. He had become such a pillar of the community that its untouchables sought him as a voucher. He kept forgetting his new steadiness. Unconsciously he still identified himself, because of his unprofitable days as a poet, with the untouchables, and so Rosemary's appeal had both surprised and dismayed him. It confirmed his fears that he could never shake off his new middle-aged respectability, that he could never be young and carefree again.

He didn't want to go to the Brent Trimble party. There had been no more telephone calls from his boss, but he was still trembling. If only the recent election could be forgotten. If only a newspaper job were just a newspaper job. Already he had lost, he was sure, the friendship that meant most to him. On the phone Jack had a way of sounding as

far away as China. And there would be other sacrifices. Keeping his job would not demand mere routine humiliations. The question was whether he could go on playing ball. The wilful wild-hearted Gael somewhere inside him—the phrase came from Joyce—might break loose some day and louse up everything.

Dena had a temperature of a hundred and two, and her nose was running and she ached all over, but she was hell-bent on going to the party, and said she needed only a light filmy wrap over her bare shoulders, which felt like wax fruit that had been sitting in the sun. She looked well, however, in her new white evening gown, which went well with her genuine, undyed bloneness and which she would have so few occasions to wear, and after all she was as strong as a brood mare and if she did strain her heart a little it might teach her to calm down and relax. And if she caught pneumonia and went quickly, then he would have a chance to relax. What to do with the children? Put them up for adoption? Quit the job and go back to poetry? Of course he'd keep them *and* the job, he really *needed* his harness sores by now, but it was nice to think of being free again, if only for a moment.

He gave her slippery shoulders an extra squeeze, by way of atoning for their premature interment, as he helped her into her gauze, and then they nipped out into the rain that had blown up unexpectedly during the afternoon and to the garage and to their unmortgaged car. A small, lady's-size umbrella kept most of the rain off her.

"Feels good!" she said bravely. She was determined to enjoy the whole thing.

"Want to go back? I'm worried about you."

"I wouldn't miss this for anything. This is our *chance*."

He didn't take her up on the unlovely word, but simply started the car and backed out of the garage. When they arrived at the Brent Trimble house, with its menacing array of Tudor intimidations, its panel and plaster battlements, he wished he had been firm. He knew already that he had walked into a Sassenach trap, and the pelt of a Celt was

going to hang out to dry. The sight of a butler in his home town was enough to terrify him. In New York he had breezed past them; they had been as invisible as elevator men; here a man in a black suit who said "Good evening!" with respect that might be disrespect was enough to make him wish he were a reporter at a third his pay, with a union to back him up and nothing to worry about.

He felt better when he discovered that the party was larger than he had expected. Also, Brent Trimble, when he reintroduced him to Mrs. Trimble—or, more exactly, reminded her of his existence, for they had known each other since childhood—said with unaccustomed warmth, "Don't they make a handsome couple, Mother!" It was the usual tribute to Dena's prettiness and his own largeness, but at the moment it helped to reassure Danny.

Mrs. Trimble's attention had meanwhile been called somewhere else, and she failed to echo the compliment, and after a moment or two more with his boss Danny was glad enough to escape with Dena and to talk to one of the college students, in a long black dress, whom he had not expected to see there, the beautiful one, named Dolores Martinez, whom he had first met at Jack's. He soon learned from her that she was going to sing for the guests after dinner, and that she had come along. Just looking at her made him feel better: if he was nervous, she was certainly more so. How strange that no composure had gone with her beauty! Some secret sorrow had made her democratic. They talked together with the eagerness of outsiders who did not ordinarily move in the right circles but were glad of a chance to give the impression that they did. Meanwhile he took two highballs from a tray brought by a waitress, and definitely felt better.

To his surprise he was soon hailed by the guest of honour, who tore himself away from much more important personages and came forward with a glad cry and a welcoming hand. "Danny!" Hank cried with none of the arrogance that might have been expected to accompany his victory. "This *is* a pleasure! Mrs. Greenup! How beautiful you

look! I kept asking my aunt to make sure you were coming. Danny! Well! Well!" He was playing his *humble* part even better than he had played it during the campaign, and he was also saying tacitly, "Look, I'm overlooking the Barn Dance. From now on we're going to be friends, see? I know all about the ultimatum that my uncle gave you. From now on you'll do no more flirting with the other side." No one could have been tougher and seemed friendlier: Danny had to admire the way he did it.

"Do you know Miss Martinez?" Dena asked.

"Do I know Miss Martinez! I'm the one who insisted that Aunt Marge have her here to sing for us. But no opera of course," Hank said quickly, and as if he had said it before, "just the light stuff she used to sing in the night-clubs." He kept staring at her while he talked.

"I didn't know you sang in night-clubs," Dena said to her, though of course she did.

"Some of the best!" said Hank, and it was amazing how much his moments of enthusiasm resembled his father's. "What a voice! We're very lucky to have her here. I only wish Shirley could hear her."

"Isn't Mrs. Trimble here tonight?" Dena asked.

"She wanted to so much. She just isn't up to it now." He said it in a way that made every woman's heart go out to him.

"Oh, I'm sorry to hear that!" Dena said warmly. She was being much pleasanter to Hank than Danny had expected. Was so ardent a New Dealer surrendering to his charm, or was she merely making the most of this great social 'chance'?

"She's all right. Nothing to worry about. But of course I do!"

"I know how you feel," Dena agreed warmly. "But what about yourself? Aren't you *exhausted*? Aren't you going to go away and take a rest? I'll bet you're the first candidate who ever stayed around when it was all over."

"You see, there's so much work to do," Hank protested winningly. "But I *am* going away tomorrow—for a few days."

"You really should! You must be *exhausted*."

"Well, I *am* a little tired."

"You must get a rest. We're going to need a good, healthy representative to look after our interests in Washington."

Danny looked at his wife covertly as if he had never seen her before. Was this the same woman who had been sick at heart about the way the election had gone? The woman whose criticism of Hank's television performance had been even more devastating than his own? There was such a thing as being too well adjusted, of taking too great advantage of every chance that offered.

"It's very kind of you to put it that way. I guess I do have to take good care of myself from now on," said Hank modestly.

"You certainly do!" Dena insisted with energy, and Danny had to admit that nothing could have been better calculated to ease his own problems with Hank and therefore with Hank's uncle. She was performing her wifely duties with shameless precision, and instead of being grateful, he wished he could walk away and disown her.

"It's a good thing he won, isn't it?" said Miss Martinez unexpectedly. "If I'd been allowed to vote, I'd have voted for him!"

"Thank you! Thank you!" Hank said smoothly but with unaccustomed pleasure.

"We need somebody there to stop the Reds," said Miss Martinez, her bashfulness suddenly vanquished by some strong, impersonal emotion. "That's what I was telling my room-mate. You know my room-mate? The French girl?"

"Oh yes," said Dena. "What's her name? Gaby?"

"That's right, Gaby. Well, she and I——"

"Aunt Marge!" cried Hank appreciatively, as the formidable Mrs. Trimble approached in what seemed a cantankerous mood. "Come and join us! What's that you've got in your hand? Oh, you must get to know my aunt!" he said to Dena. "She has *such* a sense of humour! And she knows what's what, too!"

"Are you Mrs. Greenup?" his Aunt Marge asked Dena belligerently.

"Yes, Mrs. Trimble." Now was her chance to make a lasting good impression on the most powerful woman in town, and she obviously wasn't going to muff it. She was even sweeter to Mrs. Trimble than she had been to Hank.

"I understand you worked for *Vogue*."

"Actually, I worked for——"

"Speak up! Did you work for *Vogue* or didn't you?"

"Actually I worked for *Mademoiselle*, but it's something like *Vogue*. Was there something you wanted to know about——?"

"It's just this article that appeared today in *Vogue*," said Mrs. Trimble, producing a magazine that had been in her hands all along. "I wanted to get your opinion on it. How do they write such stuff? That's what I want to know!"

When the offensive nature of the article had been carefully explained to Dena—actually, she had read it three days earlier—she knew exactly what to say. "Oh, I understand so well what you mean! But everybody knows that *you're* Mrs. Trimble of Trimble!"

"It doesn't say so there."

"Oh well! That article was written by somebody who just didn't *understand*. As a matter of fact, I know the person who wrote it and——"

"But why do they go on about what she did to that house? She *ruined* it! You know that, don't you?"

"Well of course." Actually, Dena admired what Augusta done to the house, admired it very much, and actually she disliked Mrs. Brent Trimble and considered her a bore, a tyrant, and a near-lunatic. She said nothing like that now. As a daily professional user of words Danny became intensely interested in each sentence that issued from his wife's mouth. How was she going to handle a situation that would have frozen him into bestial silence? What was she going to say?

"Have you ever seen it?"

"Oh yes."

"Did you *like* it?" Mrs. Trimble asked with the intensity of a Congressman demanding of a witness if he had ever been a member of the Communist Party. And there was no Fifth Amendment among women.

"I couldn't say I *liked* it."

"Didn't you hate it?"

Danny walked away. Two county judges stood near-by; he went up and greeted them. They were discussing a deputy sheriff who had been fired for no reason, and he didn't enlighten them. He couldn't stay there and listen to Dena any longer. Later he noticed that Mrs. Trimble kept Dena at her side, and did not seem at all displeased with her, so she must have said the right thing; the test had been passed, the chance seized, the denial made, the betrayal consummated; but he was no longer interested. He wanted to go to confession. But what did he have to confess? Marrying outside the Church? Not bringing his kids up as Catholics? Living in what the Church called sin? Or playing ball? Or not being a wilful wild-hearted Gael any more?

Whatever it was he had done wrong, there would never be any forgiveness for him. *This* was the sin against the Holy Ghost.

Just before they went into dinner Dena told him that she felt well again; her grippe had been miraculously cured. And sure enough, her shoulder no longer felt like wax fruit. What would have made him incurably ill had been the best medicine for her. Disloyalty to her natural sentiments had restored her health. She was in great form, looked more beautiful than ever, and both his host and hostess seemed delighted with her.

"And to think, you've been living here all this time," Mrs. Trimble said to her enthusiastically. "You must come and see me."

Brent Trimble patted Danny on the shoulder gratefully. It was well known in town that anything that calmed his Mrs. down pleased him. "That's a great little wife you've got there!" he said of Dena.

DEAR, DEAR MONIQUE,

As a matter of fact, you are right, I *have* thought of returning to Algiers, to my mother, to you. But I am not going to. Just because you played *La Putain Respectueuse* herself in that bad university production (I liked *you*, though) you mustn't take J.-P. Sartre's view of America too seriously. Actually, he has been as much influenced by the propaganda of Herr Goebbels as my poor father was. A great deal *is* wrong on this side of the Atlantic, and I never felt it so painfully as I do now, but the picture of both Goebbels and Sartre is distorted by ignorance and malice. I am as much disturbed as you by recent trends in American politics, but I am trying to keep a little perspective.

It's not easy at the moment. My room-mate and I have separated, and I must admit it has upset me. She was such a nice girl. But I've told you all about her—her wonderful voice, her timidity, her loneliness, her helplessness.

I thought she agreed with my low opinion of the new Congressman. Before the election I said what I thought of him, and never noticed her silence. But the day after the election, when I said what a shame it had been, she turned on me! She was glad he had won. What America needed most was to stop the Communists and he would help do it. The people were right. The people were always right. I looked at her more closely while she went on and on and on, and I realised what a fool I had been. She was in love with him!

Of course I never mentioned politics again, but it didn't do any good. We began to quarrel about everything. Before the end of the week—this week—she had found another place and moved into it. Of course I can't afford to live alone, and I'm waiting for someone else to be moved into this place with me, but for a few days I'll be alone, and I must say I'm enjoying it. She was a nice



girl, but such a fool! She actually saw that contemptible Trimble Junior as a knight errant slaying dragons that would otherwise ravage the countryside, demand an annual quota of virgins, etc., etc. Her innocence was unbelievable. Or was it ignorance, wilful ignorance of the kind that won't see the truth even when it is right under one's nose?

Well, I'm not going to worry about her. There must be something wrong with her, and I'm afraid it's much darker than I realised. To be attracted to *that*! It's like the French girls who were fascinated by the Nazis—and later got their hair cropped for it. I give up! I'm simply no longer interested!

The only one I can talk to now is Tommy O'Connell. I've seen him a few times since he invited me to *Monsieur Vincent*, which Le Cercle Français showed on a small screen in the main auditorium. We went out for coffee afterwards. I don't think I scandalise him any more, though I did make another mistake when I mentioned the nude Venus that some naughty person had drawn in chalk next to a statue of the Virgin in the slums of Paris. Tommy hadn't noticed it. I saw his dear, good face get that *troubled* look, and so I quickly changed the subject—back to the excellence of St. Vincent de Paul's character, etc., etc. Tommy would never believe that I could admire both St. Vincent and the naughty artist; he would merely think me French and wicked. As a matter of fact, we *don't* talk very much, except about his boredom with his freshman classes, his mother's heart 'condition', and his plan to go to Paris next summer. He's afraid to discuss politics and I don't try any more. There's much more of a reign of silence at the college than when I first came here, and the students are every bit as conservative as the faculty. They seem to be already weighing the possible effect of each word they utter upon the jobs they may or may not get when they receive their diplomas. Absolutely none of the gay, foolish, impractical theorising that we do so much of in our French universities. The fact that

America is now the world's greatest power has meant that individual Americans are more timid than ever before, and that all sorts of rascals take advantage of their timidity.

Interruption. I have just been called to the telephone and invited to dinner this evening by Augusta. I'm taking Tommy with me, though he seems a little nervous about it. It's all very impromptu, but that's the kind of party I like. Also I shall see the only man who really interests me.

Monday

I'll just finish this off with a few sentences, because I *must* study. We'll be having our mid-term examinations soon, and I still don't understand why I took logic! I know why. Because my father was forever telling my mother that she was illogical, and I resolved that I would be one woman who could reason as well as any man. My father was logical, and so was yours, and a great deal of good it did them! Logic meant Pétainisme in those days, later it meant Gaullisme. Now what does it mean?

One thing it *never* meant is the strange new politics of Trimble Senior. I was so nervous after I came back from Augusta's! I couldn't sleep last night. And yet it was a beautiful dinner, cooked by Jack Trimble himself. (He insists that I call him Jack now. It's still not easy, it makes everything more painful, but I do it.)

Augusta asked me about Dolores. "How is she? Such a nice girl."

"Such a nice girl, but I don't like her any more."

"No? What's the matter?"

"We're not rooming together any more."

"What happened?" Jack asked.

"As a matter of fact, it was about you."

"Me?" He looked *so* wonderful when he said it.

"Well, you and your son. I said that I considered his election a catastrophe, and she disagreed with me. She said it was a good thing because——"

"I think it was a good thing, too," he said, "on the whole."

"What!"

"Yes. The sooner the people see how untrustworthy his so-called 'new conservatism' is, the better for this country."

"But how can you believe that after—after what he did to you, not to mention anything else?"

"I don't like what he did to me, naturally, but if I forget that, I can reconcile myself to an election that went the wrong way for me."

"I just don't understand you!"

"The fact that people believed that ridiculous radio speech of his shows they *wanted* to believe. Their apple-cart is getting so big that they think the slightest doubt might turn it over. But their will to believe won't last very long when it's confronted with the facts of the American situation. I've spent quite a bit of my life among the facts that are going to destroy any easy faith. Now it will be interesting to see what happens. I can afford to wait." He said it as calmly, as impersonally, as when he used to tell us in the lecture hall to cherish our obscurity, to do only work that we really believed in.

"But meanwhile——!"

"Meanwhile we just have to take it. For people with insight there will always be a tragic time-lag. We're living with a lot of people who haven't caught on. They're the same people who deliver our milk and fill up our gas tanks and build our houses, and so when they're a little stupid we just have to be patient with them."

"But what if demagogues like your son get us into war?"

"We'll have to take that too." They've done it before and they'll do it again. The important thing is never to take an evolutionary attitude towards politics, as if they were ever going to improve. If they do, something else must be sacrificed."

"Don't you even believe in education?" Tommy asked with horror, as if regretting being seen with such a dangerous man.

"Of course I believe in education, but not to make life better. Only a change of heart can do that. Education can only make it more exciting."

"Whew!" cried Tommy.

"If you take such a hopeless view of politics," I asked, "what's the good of this psychopolitics you're supposed to be working on? This new science that's going to——"

"Oh, that's just a defence for people like myself. And it's not a science, really, it's an art. So much has been learned by the psychologists, why shouldn't a new wisdom be made of our new knowledge? And put at the disposal of the few who must be helpless before the power-maniacs? The idea is to give them a power of their own, a secret if you like, comparable to the magic used by the old medicine men against the old tribal chiefs."

"But that isn't possible when nobody believes in magic any more!"

"Perhaps it *is* possible. There are still certain secrets in nature that will enable even the intellectual, that perennial sitting duck, to hold his own with the politician. But he can't be as lazy as or narrow-minded as he is now. And he must never try to imitate the politician. He must accept his helplessness—and then find the way to turn it into a strength."

I was really disappointed by such feeble reasoning. I had admired his mind so much. "Do you really think so?"

"For instance," he said, "if I hold out long enough against my son, he will want to make peace with me. My brother already wants to."

"How can you have such confidence?" I cried. "Wasn't that the hope that intellectuals felt in Germany? And in Russia? Look what happened to them!"

"I saw what happened in Russia, and I know what happened in Germany. Of course there have been failures. Bloody failures, wholesale murders. Lessons to learn from. *Here* there's more chance, because men like my brother are still in power. Men with old-fashioned consciences. Their place will probably be taken by men with

new-fashioned consciences, or no consciences at all. We're still coasting along on an anachronism. Otherwise I would never have had a chance to drop politics and come home and cultivate my garden. Soon my kind of adventure may be impossible. The darkness may close in. Then the real heroes will be born."

"How can you count on it?" I demanded. He infuriated me. At the same time I had never felt closer to him. It was confusing.

"I can't. But I can do everything in my power to make it possible. I can try to avoid the mistakes that Russian and German intellectuals made. And I can also keep enough perspective on humanity to have faith in it. The best picture of the coming darkness is *1984*, which you admire so much, but I say it's an unrealistic book. It has no hope. Hope is part of realism, it takes into account our sure future reaction against darkness. Spirit will always have to struggle against power, and at times it will be all but snuffed out, but it will go on. Even in Russia. Even here. *That* is the human condition. Despair is just an avoidance of issues. Aside from being not especially courageous, your catastrophism is unrealistic."

I didn't believe a word he said and I let him know it by saying nothing. At that same time, I must admit, I felt he possessed a silent, mysterious method, unknown to me, that would enable him to surmount problems that would have destroyed, or hopelessly confused, other men. I felt he had had the change of heart he spoke of. I never wanted him more.

"Then you do believe in education!" Tommy said with relief. "After all!"

"Let's put it this way. I believe in a new kind of education. A secret education that will never get into print, that can never be expressed in a formula."

"It sounds esoteric," said Tommy suspiciously.

Jack avoided that unpopular word. "From now on everyone who wants a life of his own will have to be much deeper, much more bilingual than it would be

politic to admit. The only way to beat double talk is bilinguality."

A great deal more was said, and I wish I could put it all down while I think of it, because he really seems to have found a thread that leads out of the labyrinth, but I simply haven't any more time. I really must get to work. Good-bye! Write soon.

Tuesday

Dolores has come back, and there's a wedding-ring on her finger, and she says she's married to Hank Trimble! She keeps saying what a wonderful man he is. There is only one thing to do, of course—I have to take her back with me. Good-bye! This really is the end. Write soon or I won't tell you how it all came out.

50

IT had been a hard day for Rudenko. Just before lunch his boss had called him into his office, where there must have been at least twenty pictures of well-known foreign correspondents and political reporters, all autographed, on the oak-panelled walls, and asked him to sit down. While Rudenko waited to be told what an exceptionally 'good job of writing' he had done with his last piece, which he had polished as carefully as any of his literary essays, he was surprised to hear his boss saying, "You know, Eugene, you're a very good writer. I read your piece three times. I wish I had your gift for phrasing things. You've got the big thing. You're a real writer. But you know what? I think you're too good for the sort of thing we're doing here."

It was the way he himself used to lead up to rejections in difficult borderline cases, Rudenko reflected uneasily, meanwhile watching an ocean liner move slowly out of its berth on the North River and enjoying anew the familiar spectacle of Manhattan seen from a great height, and he wondered if his boss's kindness were a gentle way of asking him to make a few changes in his article. "I think you're too good," the

boss repeated. "You shouldn't be here. You should be writing more of those wonderful essays of yours."

"But I can't live by writing essays," Rudenko said, beginning at last to catch on. "I get almost nothing for them, and they take weeks, sometimes months, to write."

"I'm sure some publisher would be glad to give you an advance," said his boss. "That fascinating mind of yours should be helping to form the literary taste of the nation, not wasting itself on the crude sort of thing we do around here."

"You mean I'm fired?" said Rudenko, still unable to grasp psychologically what he had already perceived intellectually.

"I've thought that perhaps you could be fitted into another department, but honestly, I don't think you'd be happy anywhere. Really happy. I've recommended that you be given an extra month's pay. It's more than we usually give to people who haven't been here any longer than you have, but we want you to know how much we respect you."

Rudenko cleared out his desk that afternoon, and moved a few personal belongings to the room that he had taken on East Thirtieth Street, near no one he knew. For a full two hours he sat on a soot-grimy bench in Madison Square Park, next to two bums arguing about single tax, and did not comprehend the passing of time until it began to get dark and he began to feel cold. He saw himself heavily, numbly, as he was: old, poor, tired, ill, lonely. The drudges who worked in the lighted tower of a near-by insurance company were more fortunate: at least their file-clerk minds believed in their pismire tasks, and they exacted a merciless toll from the general terror of poverty. He had lost his enthusiasm for the greatest thing of all, for literature. When he got a new book for review it was a burden, and sometimes, he feared, he treated it as such. He couldn't look forward to a whisky and soda, because of the pain it would soon start up in his sinus, and the best meal in the best French restaurant meant merely another night of intestinal agony.

Women, now that he had lost his enormous prestige—for years he had taken care to see only bluestockings who idolised his magazine—sometimes looked at him as if he were made of the kind of meat that a butcher pares off and throws away. Worst of all, he could not summon any violence, and nobody was afraid of him; when he woke up in the morning he was usually in a very *reasonable* state of mind, and tended to blame himself for his misfortunes; and when he went out in the evening—as he still did occasionally, if it was a party where he was sure to be treated with great respect—he was amazed at how many times other people interrupted him or implied that what he was saying was nonsense.

What was the point of going on at all? But if he killed himself now, he would get very poor space on the obituary page, and probably no picture at all. While if he held out a little longer, and raised the money to start up the *Scythian* again, he would soon recapture his old prominence, and *this time* he would never let it slip away from him. Then, if existence ever became unendurable, he could put an end to it with some assurance of appropriate public grief. Under such circumstances, however, suicide would be unlikely. Good writers were by definition rare, and if they persisted, the most indifferent and anti-literary society could be forced to do them honour—through minority pressure. In a modern democracy it was infinitely better, for those who sought artistic glory, to belong to a tough, resistant minority, than to achieve popularity. In the arts popularity was sure death, and life was imitating art more rapidly than usual. Even in politics popularity was becoming dangerous. A minority bows and remembers; the majority rules and forgets.

The shrewdest course was to belong to a minority that the majority overlooks. His Communism had been moronic, an open bid for power; and perhaps his Republicanism also was a mistake, especially now that the trend was toward the Republicans. It might turn out that his dismissal from his job was the best thing that could have happened to him.



The absurdity that journalistic hopes had led him into! The foolish notes he had taken in Ohio! He should get back to literary criticism again, as fast as he could, and never stray from it. There he could be as subversive as he liked, and no one would ever notice. It would all come under the heading of education, and not even Congress would dare attack that.

It was imperative that he start up the *Scythian* again. Sue Trimble would provide the money if he married her. Nothing better than a ghost-writing job could be wangled from her father by the most abject flattery, and even that was doubtful. But Sue could pave the road back to literature. She was not terribly attractive, but she would do, and once she had a child she would stay put.

She must not know that he had lost his job. During her stay in New York, he had kept her away from literary circles, to prevent her discovering his recent loss of prestige, and now he must also keep her away from his magazine friends. A quick wedding would be best. He had carefully avoided the slightest movement towards love-making, either verbal or physical, although she had given him numerous openings. Now he would sweep her off her feet. She must be ready and more than willing.

He rose from the bench, brushed soot off the seat of his topcoat, and lit a cigarette. He had a date to take her to dinner that night, as usual, and the ridiculous hotel where she insisted on staying was not so far away that he couldn't walk to it. He disliked the neighbourhood, however, because his father had once worked in a sweet shop there, and any reminder of his father was repugnant to him, especially then. Not only had his father been poor, he had also considered poverty a virtue, infected his family with his sentimental socialism, and been so unrealistic that when he came to the New World and was convinced by his much smarter wife that he should change the name of Rudnick, he had gone to a lawyer and paid good money, not for something American like Robinson or Rutledge or Roosevelt, but for the name of an obscure agrarian leader in the

Ukraine who had written an article about politics that he had once admired. No less foreign. And then not told his family until they were all legally Rudenkos and couldn't do anything about it, unless they paid money to go before a judge who might draw the line at a second chance.

And women could be very fussy about names. Doris had frankly admitted that she didn't like being called Mrs. Rudenko, and after her marriage had seen little of her family and taken care to move only in circles where her name was known and respected. And Sue might also object. Like Doris and unlike her father, she had no religious or nationalistic prejudices, as she had made very clear more than once, but on the other hand a silly thing like an ill-chosen name might still frustrate his plans. Once again, as so often before, he would have to work extra hard to offset his father's stupidity.

When he reached her room in the Saint Rocco he found Sue in black dancing tights, except that her muscular legs were bare, and she was practising the can-can while a portable gramophone played Offenbach's *Gaieté Parisienne*. She had left the door open for him, and he walked in to see what was going on, and just then, as the record reached a climax, she did *le grand écart*, or the split, as it used to be called in the burlesque theatre on Second Avenue. The flimsy building shook as her legs, opened like scissors, crashed to the poorly-carpeted floor.

"Stop it!" he cried.

"What's that?" The music was very loud, and she looked as if she might have hurt herself.

"Stop it!" He turned off the music.

"Thanks. Yes, I guess I've had enough. I'm getting out of here. Too many splinters." She spoke with difficulty; she was breathing heavily. But she was not hurt, merely scratched, and she looked happy.

"Good! Are you moving up-town?"

"I guess I have to. I've called up the Plaza. Will you help me move?"

"I'll be glad to! That's wonderful!" And then he

realised what he should have thought of before: at the Plaza there was much more chance of her meeting people he didn't want her to meet, and discovering what had happened to him. "I've got a better idea. Let's take a trip. I'm getting a vacation. Let's rent a car and go South. It's beginning to get cold. They say it's warm down there."

"Give me a hand." She reached up, and he helped her rise from the floor.

When she stood next to him he put an arm about her shoulders, which were covered with damp black jersey. "You looked beautiful while you were dancing."

She didn't resist him. "Beautiful? Am I beautiful? I'm going to take a bath. Come on in with me." She led him by the hand into the bathroom, where she undid a button on the black jersey at a shoulder and swiftly stripped herself. She *was* beautiful, and he also understood, for the first time, that there was nothing ridiculous, as he had thought, in her desire to dance. Merely because she had not succeeded in the ballet was no reason to scorn her. By the harsh standards he had known since childhood she was a flop and therefore a fool, and yet——

When he tried to embrace her again she pushed him away and stepped quickly into the tub and turned on the shower. She did not, however, draw the curtain to, and he enjoyed watching her. It was like looking at raw food—peas in clean pods and well-scrubbed mushrooms—in the window of a good restaurant before you went in to dinner.

"So you want to take me on a trip?" she called above the splash of water.

"Yes!"

"Are your intentions honourable?"

"Well——" He grinned suggestively.

"Would you make love to me?"

"Well——" He grinned again.

"Would you marry me?"

"Sure! Sure, I'll marry you!"

"Oh! So you'll marry me?" He didn't like the way she said it. "Why? To make an honest woman of me?"

"No! I want to. I want to marry you!" He hadn't wanted to lead up to it that way.

"Why?" she persisted. "Do you love me?"

"Yes! I love you. It's taken me some time to find out, and I wanted to be sure, but now I know."

"And that's why you want to marry me? No other reason?"

"That's why."

"Come here." She held her lips up for him to kiss. "Kiss me."

He kissed her wet lips.

"Faker!" She reached up and, before he knew what was happened, turned the spout of the shower towards him. He was drenched before he could back out of range. "I've known you were a faker all along. I was just waiting for this!"

"I'm not faking," he protested. "I mean it."

"You don't love me. You don't even like me. I've been on to you for some time." She looked as if she were about to weep.

"I'm not faking," he protested again. "I meant every word." And his critic's ear overheard his own falsity.

"Get out!" she screamed. "Get out!" She picked up a wet face-cloth and flung it at him. "I can't stand the sight of you!"

He dried out in a near-by cafeteria, the same one where Battenberg had taken him eighteen years before, just after F. D. Roosevelt's first election, to tell him what the cultural policy of the *Scythian* was to be. All he wanted was coffee. Later on he would get a decent meal, one that his stomach could digest, in the kind of place he was accustomed to. But food wasn't important just then. He had had an idea for an article that he wanted to write. The reason why American literature was getting so bad was that it didn't *dare* to deal with important themes; it was afraid of failure, and so concentrated on trifles, where success was relatively certain. More technically, our literary roughnecks were afraid of the mind and therefore couldn't deal honestly with

their experience; they were committed to an anti-intellectual romanticism that meant permanent immaturity; while our æsthetes might sometimes be capable of thinking clearly but had shrunk so far, in their sensitivity, from experience that they had very little to write about. It was a vicious circle, and inherent in modern American life because our extraverted pioneering tradition had been followed so close by the wealth—and introversion—by-produced by our vast industries. We were still either too mindless like Whitman or too withdrawn like Henry James, and no contemporary had bridged the gap.

A good essay could be made from it, and he wanted nothing more than to sit down and write. At the moment he felt glad he had lost the *Scythian*, lost his job, lost Sue. In the morning he would be more realistic, he knew, and regret his losses bitterly, but now he didn't mind them. Power, esteem, and security had no reality just then; he merely wanted to write. It was madness, of course, but he hadn't felt so young in years. He had re-found his harp in Babylon.

51

FORTUNATELY, there was a bench in front of the clinic, and when Augusta was able to leave her doctor sooner than she had expected she found a place to sit down and wait until Jack came back in the car. The Indian summer sun was so warm that she would almost have felt more comfortable if she had taken off the light-weight woollen coat that she had bought a few years before in Sligo, where she had seen the grave of Yeats and wandered in Lissadell, the garden he had loved. The news from the doctor was good: she was as well as she had thought herself to be and barring accidents should go on that way and have her baby without too much trouble. It was the happiest news she had ever received, and the gentle smile on her face was a benediction to the entire world. No critical tribute to her pictures in London had ever meant as much to her

as the reassurances of an obscure physician whose son, she had also learned, was putting himself through college by collecting old medical bills. The crudest fertility seemed more glorious than the most delicate art, and she would much rather be a madonna than paint one.

A tall young coloured woman sat down on the far end of the bench—very dark of skin, with the wide nostrils, staring eyes, and long neck of a Nigerian bronze princess. She also was carrying a child, but it would be delivered soon. “Yeah, man!” she said. “My feet!” She had a friendly smile and a hymn-singer’s voice. “Where he at?” She slipped her shoes off. She wore a dusty sweat-shirt, and most likely worked on a farm.

“You waiting too?” asked Augusta.

“Yes, ma’am!”

“So am I.”

“Yore hosband?”

“Yes.”

They sat in silence. There wasn’t anything else to say. But a connection had been made, however fortuitous, however brief.

The clinic was a one-storey frame building, in the shape of a U, which had been built by Brent across the road from Trimble Memorial Hospital. Augusta had just been charged three dollars, the coloured woman probably fifty cents or nothing. Its patients paid what they could. When they had an accident or needed an operation they went to the hospital, which was five storeys high, as intricate as a cathedral, and surfaced with cool red brick. Both buildings stood on a small hill overtopping the city, the dragon-shaped river, and the russet hills of Kentucky in the distance, which looked like nestling phoenixes. A mild breeze blew off the river, the breath of an infant god.

The morning had been lovely, but no more so than any other recent morning. She had first waked before dawn, to see an almost full moon setting over the lake outside her window. The stillness, a trembling dry leaf on a bare branch, a fox’s hoarse bark, a distant rooster, a belief that

she was looking as directly at Diana as any mortal ever had, a dreamy conviction that she was bearing a new kind of Messiah, and one more blissful day had begun. She would sleep again, and later on she would feel sickish; the smell of food might have upset her even then; but such minor perils only intensified her satisfaction. She wanted to waken Jack, who had been staying all night with her lately, but stopped when her hand was almost on his shoulder. He woke anyway, a minute later, when she went to the window to look out, and then they shared the unreal scene together.

There had been so many such moments lately. Because of her early faith in art, as the only sure way to happiness, they had taken her by surprise. She had not known that mere living could be so delightful. Perhaps she was being tricked, and giving her heart to an impostor. She was quite willing to continue the fraud, which appeased her artistic conscience with promises of better pictures to come, when the joys with which she was now being impregnated should duly reach the time of travail and delivery. And meanwhile mere living began to seem the rarest feat of all.

None of her new consciousness would have been possible without Jack. He had not only filled her womb, he had given her a fuller sense of purpose. Together they had agreed on a way to live then and a way to live later on. They had a concrete programme. Barring accidents, their child would be born in late-May. It would be quite simple to go in September to Washington, where Jack had a standing offer from an old friend to take a full professorate in a well-endowed graduate school in advanced international studies. It paid ten thousand a year. If they wanted to keep their house in Trimble, they could. It had become so attractive—and so well publicised—that there had already been offers to rent it. But if they felt that they no longer cared to live in Trimble, they could leave it for ever. It wouldn't be hard to sell the house. And they were beginning to consider the idea.

After all, their reason for coming to Ohio had been a search for roots. But *their* kind of roots were more psycho-

logical than physical, and their kind of life would be pretty much the same anywhere. If Jack couldn't earn a living in Trimble, he would have to go where he could. His attempted reunion with his family had not worked out. It was still a time for his kind of man to move *away from* Main Street, and although she appreciated the clarity she had gained in retirement, and although the mere thought of moving away from her home did a violence to her, she had already half-accepted his masculine imperatives. She must root out her love of Trimble. She must forget what she had put into it. Much more important than any permanent address, much more important than living in her beloved home, much more important than blood and land, was something else. And that something else could mean leaving a perfect studio almost as soon as you had built it, and turning over your kitchen to a stranger. That something else was spirit, and spirit, more often than not, was at war with blood and land. She had followed it where it listed long enough to know the storm damage it could do to comfort and peace of mind—damage so famous in history that every great spiritual leader had specifically warned against family ties and a fixed abode. The half-way resisted its terrifying demands; the wholehearted accepted them. It was a breath, a command, and the few who heard it had to obey it.

Her present tranquillity, her present readiness for any new test had resulted directly from their abstention from politics. At one time during the campaign the slightest indignation on her part would have sent Jack headlong into it. She had conquered some very natural emotions, as well as her sense of justice, and that was how she had kept him from making a serious mistake. Now the election was over, and it was, of course, much better that they had taken an aloof, philosophical attitude toward it. Much better that Hank should be given a chance to disillusion those who had placed their hopes in him. Such electoral mistakes were inevitable in a democracy, as Jack had told Gaby, and perhaps one should be grateful for them, as part of a long-range educational process. It was right for others to participate actively



in elections, it was not right for *them*. All they could do was vote.

She thought she saw a familiar figure come out of the hospital. Yes! It was Gaby! And she was starting to walk towards the college.

What was she doing there?

"Gaby! Gaby!" she called, and then got off the bench slowly.

"Good-bye," she said to the coloured woman.

"Good-bye," said the coloured woman.

"Gaby!"

At last she got Gaby's attention, and they met in the middle of the road between the two buildings. Gaby was wearing an old grey tweed suit that she used, for reasons of economy, when she was studying.

"What are you doing here?"

"What are *you* doing here?"

They sat down on a bench on the hospital side of the road. It was plain that Gaby was deeply disturbed about something.

"She is more quiet," she said.

"Who?"

"Dolores."

"What's the matter?"

"I asked ssem to put her in sse hospital. For what ssey call observation."

"What's the matter!"

"She ssinks she is married to your stepson."

"To Hank!"

"Yes. Is very serious. She wears a wedding-ring, and talks about him continually. I don't know exactly what happened, because she wasn't living wiss me ssen. Do you remember ssat night ssat Tommy and I had dinner wiss you? It was raining so hard? Ssat must have been why she spent the night at your brother-in-law's, and why——"

"At Brent's?"

"Yes, and Hank must have been ssere too. Maybe some-ssing happened ssat night between ssem. Maybe later. Is

sse only way I can explain her delusion. Perhaps she wants to believe she is married to him because somessing happened—you know——”

Augusta wanted to get away from Gaby. The news that poor Dolores was mentally so ill that she had been put in a hospital was so unpleasant that it might destroy her own serenity. Eager as she was for details of what had happened, she also wanted to shut them out; they might make her lose the calm assurance with which she had been facing the future a few minutes before.

“Isn’t that terrible?” she commented, but in such a way as not to invite further confidences.

Gaby, however, was not easily discouraged. Her usual tact had been replaced by moral indignation. It was obvious that she had had a profound experience. “Ssat Hank! He *must* have done it! Is sse only way ssere could be such a *breakdown*. She is so sad, sse way she twists her wedding-ring. So religious—she couldn’t have done *ssat* without marriage! She must have bought it at a ten-cent store! If I can only get some evidence, I’ll have him arrested. I don’t care if ssey *do* send me back to France, I won’t let him do ssis and go free. He watched her so long—like a hawk! When she can talk more clearly I’ll ask her questions. I have studied wiss sse Faculty of Law.”

“Do you think it would be wise?”

“No! Of course not! But I am going to do it!”

A few months earlier or a few months later, Augusta felt, she would have been as deeply disturbed and as deeply concerned about justice. Now she simply couldn’t be. In calm lay health, and in health salvation. All her plans required that she ignore Dolores’s tragedy. She hated her enforced indifference, but she did not dare change it.

“Sink of what ssis will mean, sse rest of her life! I have known girls who had ssis happen, ssey were never sse same again! She liked him, of course, perhaps she even loved him, but she didn’t want *ssat*! Is been too great a shock for her—I really wonder if she will ever be well again. Really well. I ssink she will always be hysterical after ssis. I have

seen it before, I know! We have had troops quartered wiss us throughout sse war. She shows me her ring every ten minutes. And tells me what a good man he is! Sse only book she will read is her prayer book. All sse time she has her rosary in her hands."

Augusta cried, "There's Jack! Oh, thank God! Good-bye, dear. Come and see us. I'm *terribly* upset of course. We'll talk about it later. Give me a ring and we'll arrange a time. Good-bye, dear!" And she almost ran away, she was so eager to escape to him. With him she would feel calm and safe again.

52

JACK felt glad as he walked up Main Street towards the post office, which had moved up-town with the expansion of the city, glad that he had developed a certain indifference to public opinion. He needed it now. People no longer looked at him the same way. Many of them pretended they hadn't seen him at all.

He couldn't blame Vern Brettschneider for ducking into a bank lobby as he approached. After all, what *could* they talk about? In Vern's eyes he had committed the unpardonable sin of not fighting. He had dug his grave and was as good as dead. If they met they could pass the time of day and that was all.

And there was the man in the laundromat, the woman in the drugstore, the man in the news-stand, the clerks in the supermarket. They couldn't duck or look away, but serving him no longer gave them pleasure. And if he had got up and made speeches, if he had chosen to explain himself, most of them might now be on his side. They were not spiteful, merely confused. They needed guidance.

Their silence, however, and in some cases their hostility, was good. It gave him a chance to become strong. He was ready now to be misunderstood.

But of course it was only because he had once received general esteem that he could now be indifferent to it. In the

same way that his earlier erotic experimentation had prepared him for love. His type might still be rare, but he was, he felt sure, a kind of American who was bound to become more and more prevalent—the kind who first demanded more of life and then more of himself. Sensuality had made him demand more of life, and now austerity was making him demand more of himself. First one must be freed from puritanism, and then from anarchy. It was a matter of ageing, and he could never have stood up in public and apologised for it. Also he could never have forfeited the strength he was gaining by his refusal to explain.

But this was a lesson he had learned in the East. "When the heart weeps for what it has lost," some Sufi mystic had said, "the spirit laughs for what it has found." The East! Where there was sensuality that made our whores seem drab; despotism and corruption that turned our demagogues into hard-working public benefactors; ignorance that flattered our worst hill-billy grade school; and next door to them a searching selflessness that neither our scientists nor our artists nor our religious appeared to approach. His education in true moral shadings had begun abroad when he had seen real black next to real white. After that it had been a little easier to disentangle the democratic greys at home, to spot the few conscious blends among the many dirty muddles. It had also been easier to walk alone when no principle but self-development was involved. Contrary to certain Washington gossip, he would never make a cult of the East, but he couldn't forget the new perspective it had given him. He could accept the psychologist's thesis that the East was influencing the West as much psychologically as the West was influencing the East technologically. He himself might provide an example: the Ambassador who had come bearing soil foods and antibiotics and gone home as much impressed by the East's continuing capacity for philosophic impregnation as by its poverty, its political immaturity, its decadence.

Long before his Eastern experiences, however, he had decided that his primary task was to become a new man, as

clear of mind and as free of self as possible. The East had clarified this task, but he had set it for himself before he ever went there. He had known that he was moving towards intellectuality and would carry no weight, no real weight, until he was spiritually as well as mentally impressive. Leadership of the kind he sought had to rest on character. True impressiveness meant the renunciation of impressiveness. And the renunciation of impressiveness meant, remarkably fast, the invitation of attack. So of his own free will, and quite deliberately, he had brought on, without, however, anticipating its strangeness, his present situation.

There had been more play in him than in his brothers. So now there must be more suffering.

In time, of course, he would regain those friendships in Trimble that he was meant to regain, and the others would not be worth mourning. And next year he would no longer be in Trimble. At last, by saying very little on the subject, he had convinced Augusta that their economic situation required a move, and at last she seemed almost reconciled to it. He had written his friend Bill Carter in Washington and told him that he would be ready to accept the teaching job the following September.

He was within a block of the post office when he saw Hank and Shirley coming out of a supermarket, competitor to the one he patronised, and carrying packages. A second look showed the ever-alarmed Jean close to the skirts of Shirley, who was more noticeably pregnant than before in a short, loose jacket that floated out in front of her. Her severe pioneer beauty had become somewhat gentler.

Hank looked grey of face, tired, and perhaps a bit apprehensive. He had come home a day or two earlier after a very brief vacation, he had told Augusta only yesterday, on the telephone, while inviting her and his father without success to another party that his Uncle Brent was giving. His father's eye, involuntarily sympathetic, seemed to detect disappointment, which was unusual for him, in his ordinarily disciplined lips.

Jack started immediately to cross the street and get away

from him. He had avoided meetings and he would continue to. Since their encounter on Hank's front porch, which he had called their 'last conversation', he had reconciled himself to seeing as little as possible of him—and of Shirley and Jean, which was a greater renunciation.

Jack was slipping between two cars, preparatory to crossing the street, when Hank came running up to him "Dad!" he cried. "Dad!" and already his face had lost some of its disappointment, no doubt because he had found a public occasion to demonstrate his filial affection.

Jack walked past the hand that he managed to outstretch by holding his large packages close to his body. "Shirley!" Jack said. "How are you, my dear?" He kissed her cheek, and then bent down to greet Jean, who looked afraid of him.

But Hank was still waiting with his hand held out when the greetings to the family were over, and finally his father had either to shake it or noticeably refuse it.

Jack shook it reluctantly. "Hello, Hank," he said with none of the warmth he had shown his wife and daughter.

"I'll take that as belated congratulations," said Hank quickly.

"Oh, I wouldn't do that if I were you."

"Don't be bitter, Dad! It's all over now."

"Is it?"

"You know, sometimes you do things in the heat of a campaign that afterwards you wish you hadn't." It was an extraordinary statement, coming from him, and perhaps it had something to do with the new disappointment in his face. After all, he *was* in a dirty business, and he *did* have to do things, merely to stay in it, that might sicken anyone else. He was still young and eager, despite his cynicism, his cruelty, his cleverness, his mental illness, and he had made considerable sacrifices to his career. Even his wife had been chosen for reasons of state. To get into his miserable trade, he had felt it necessary to be as politic in his domestic arrangements as a king. Was there love behind his unhappiness? At one time he had seemed powerfully drawn to the

beautiful co-ed with the Spanish name. In such circumstances, having made such compromises, he would attach high value to the love he had given up. And be very sad, at his age, about losing it. Because of course he had lost it for ever.

"All right," Jack said, "I'll forget it." And forgiveness brought with it, as usual, a feeling of health.

"And you *will* come to the party at Uncle Brent's? He wants you to—very much."

"Oh, but we're busy that night," Jack said suavely at once. Forgiveness was one thing, weakness another. "Too bad!"

"I wish you could!" The boy really did look troubled about something.

"Sorry, we just can't." Jack turned quickly away to say good-bye to Shirley and Jean.

Meanwhile a passer-by tipped his hat and said admiringly to Hank, "Howdy, Mr. Trimble!" And Hank's face lost its sadness at once, while he greeted the stranger with a broad public smile. *That* was his reward. And he probably thought it better than love. No use wasting too much sympathy on him.

"Good-bye!" Jack said to Hank as soon as the passer-by had passed.

"Don't go!" Hank begged. "I have a message for you. I'd have given it to you on the phone if you'd been willing to talk to me. Uncle Brent asked me to sound you out."

"What about?"

"There's going to be a big job open at the college next year. In your field. Much better than anything you had before. And permanent. He wants to know if you would take it."

"Oho! So his conscience troubles him. No, thanks!"

"Don't put it that way, Dad. This means a lot to him. He wants to endow a chair in international relations, and he wants you to take it. It's the subject of the future! I'll come to your lectures when I'm here."

Jack recalled Brent's insistent attempt to win his friend-

ship at the news-stand. His brother's conscience was troubled, and it could be every bit as tenacious as his desire to run the show quietly, though it sometimes took a little longer to show itself and, like the groundhog, only came out when there was certain to be a warm spring-time, which in his case meant behind-the-scenes authority. "No, thanks! It would never work out. He'd regret it very soon, and begin doing everything in his power to squeeze me out of town. We've been through all that!"

"You wouldn't have to worry about that, Dad. He has his heart set on this. Don't turn him down! He'll make you a very decent proposition. And if you take it, he'll see to it that you get all the respect that goes with it."

"Oho! So the mud-slinging is to be called off too!"

"Don't be bitter, Dad." Was it possible that Hank too regretted that part of the campaign? Perhaps he had been lectured for it by his uncle. Perhaps now that he had won some power, he was beginning to appreciate the wisdom of more conservative tactics, if he wanted to hold on to power. "Don't be too clever," Brent had always told him, and perhaps he was beginning to learn. The boy was naturally conservative; he had been *scared* into un-conservative tactics by his fear of not winning. And now of course he was beginning to realise the size of the job he had been so eager to get.

"Think it over, Dad. You won't get a better offer anywhere. And I want you to know how much I want you to take it. We need you here!"

Jack finally made his escape and went to the post office, a relatively new white building in a neo-Babylonian style which was already looking dingy. The catch to modern architecture was that it couldn't age gracefully, but required as many cosmetics as an attractive woman: as no doubt the manufacturers of building materials were aware. His mind drifted to this generalisation to avoid considering the offer just made him. He worked the combination on his mailbox and took out some ten or fifteen letters. One of them came from Washington, from the school of which Bill



Carter was head, and Jack noticed that his hands trembled as he opened it, at once, to see what it said. Perhaps he had been too confident that the job was still waiting for him. Bill had assured him, and yet it was always a mistake to take such things for granted.

Yes, he *had* made a mistake. The letter was evasive. No, it was not evasive; it was as blunt as it dared to be:

As for the opening here, it is too early to say anything at all, and I wouldn't dare guess what the Board will finally decide. But I would suggest that you accept one of the other offers that I am sure you have received. I do hope you will understand me. It is only because I value your capacities so very highly, and wish to see them employed, especially in the new circumstances that have arisen, that I write so frankly.

It would take a trip to Washington to find out exactly what Bill meant, but Jack felt fairly certain that gossip brought back to Washington by Dr. Pomeroy had reached Bill's ears. The situation was far more serious than he had believed, than he had allowed himself to believe. Bill was his friend, as ever; Bill was trying to warn him.

As he drove towards the clinic to get Augusta, he decided that his present predicament had been the logical consequence of his desire for a life of his own. The amazing thing was, not that his search for clarity had got him into trouble, but that it had not got him into trouble sooner. In almost no other country would it have been possible to avoid social discipline so long. In a great many countries he would have been killed long ago. He had been coasting on America's accrued wealth, of liberty as well as resources, and at last his double inheritance was running out. Now he would have to take the consequences of his estrangement from society. The Promethean act of forethought still brought an eagle out of the sky, even in God's country. And the weather was clouding up in a once smiling land. He had seen how dark it could get.

Now he would have to find a job. There were many possibilities, but none of them worthy of serious consideration. Carpentry or gardening. Or clerking in a store. Or grave-digging. Or going back into the oil business.

Of course they weren't realistic. None of them. He would take the job that Brent was offering him. He would exploit his brother's conscience, make as shrewd a bargain as he could. He would end hostilities in the American way, he would make a deal. There would be nothing beautifully tragic or apocalyptic about it; and it would be deeply unflattering, because it would underline his harmlessness. He was actually as harmless as a dove, and so it would be just as well if he learned from his ancient predecessors, if he tried to become as wise as a serpent. Like every other intellectual, he depended finally on Brent or Hank or their equivalent—and in some places their equivalents were a lot worse. Spirit always had to accommodate itself to power, and power never went to *his* kind. The best his kind could hope for was to make a continual, hopeful effort to put someone fairly congenial into office.

The effort would be defeated for a while; a rich people had too many illusions, their will to believe was too easily satisfied by charlatans. Meanwhile he would be despised by Vern Brettschneider and many others for biding his time. His decision not to fight just then would be called unmanly, un-American. Perfect intransigence would be demanded of him by those who made two or three deals every day. Such guilt-manceuvres no longer worked on him. Those on the Left who practised them would do well to examine themselves while the Right was in power, or they would not be ready when their hour came again. The chances were that their hour would come very soon, the Right's ignorance was so comprehensive, so arrogant, and that they would bungle their new opportunity when they got it. Among his kind, therefore, hope would turn inward, amid general disaster. Intellectuals again would imagine they could escape politics.

As he approached the clinic he saw the river, which flowed

on with its usual indifference. It had watched mound-dwellers, Indian massacres, Boone's crossing, runaway slaves, Morgan's Raiders. It was, as the state song claimed, beautiful: On either side stood sycamores, known as plane trees in ancient Athens, and perhaps the conversation along its banks would be as good some day as that which the Ilissus had overheard. Danny and he, friends again and skirting its mudflats, would try to pass on a lucky phrase or two to the fluent sages who would succeed them centuries hence. Meanwhile he would continue to believe that a classic age, in which personal vigour meant just as much as at any other time, had already arrived. Technology had brought back primitivism, and primitivism was bringing back classic self-reliance. The many new determinisms were clearing the way for responsible freedom of choice.

When he reached the clinic he saw Augusta jump up at once from a bench and almost run towards him, as if she were trying to get away from poor harmless Gaby, whom she always liked to see. (Now that he was going to teach again at Trimble, he must try to induce Gaby to stay another year; he needed good pupils to draw him out.) And after they had waved good-bye to Gaby and started for home, Augusta poured out her happiness at seeing him and a rather jumbled story about Dolores and Hank.

He didn't listen. His news was more important. "You're going to keep your house after all," he told her. "Trimble wants me. They love me so much around here they won't let me go."

53

AS she took her place at the college convocation, between the friendly Brent and the solicitous Hank, Augusta felt uneasy. She was sure Jack was going to make trouble for himself as soon as he began to deliver his speech.

She kicked the snow off her goloshes, but kept them on. She allowed Hank, however, to help her off with her dark-green tweed overcoat, which had become wet around the

collar. It was less than a week before Christmas, Founder's Day, when there was always a convocation of the entire student body, at their last meeting before they separated for the holidays, and Jack had been asked to address it. His return to the college, with a department of his own, had already been publicly announced, and Brent had also seized the present opportunity, when the president of the college became ill, to help to rebuild Jack in popular esteem. It was part of their 'deal', which he was carefully observing—for if he had ever regretted the offer that his conscience had obliged him to make, he had never shown it—but Jack had become disquietingly suspicious.

"Does he really think he can tie my hands?" Jack had asked her, though speaking half to himself, after accepting the speaking engagement by telephone.

"Tie your hands?"

"With gratitude. So I won't say something controversial."

"Of course not! He's just doing what he promised to do." She didn't want Jack to become moody about what he sometimes called his 'surrender'.

"I wonder. It's so well-timed. Just before Christmas, when everybody is feeling charitable. My re-entrance has to be docile. I can't possibly say anything troublesome."

"If you feel that way about it, why did you accept?"

"I'm not sure."

"You could have refused."

"No, I wanted—some instinct in me wanted me to accept. Maybe I *can* say something after all! Semi-religious occasion. Hold-over from the old denominational days. Sacred memories of the Founder. Dear old Great-grandpa. Sure, there's a lot I can say!"

His tone had been ever so slightly ominous. Since the invitation had arrived only a day before the speech was to be delivered, he had sat up most of the night at his typewriter. There wasn't any time for her to see what he had written, because the convocation was called for nine o'clock in the morning, and when she asked to look at his manu-

script, while they breakfasted, he said he had only made notes and they were upstairs.

So she felt uneasy when she took her place in the auditorium between Brent and Hank, and Jack took his place, with a confident smile, on the stage with the Dean, who was going to introduce him. The concern of his relatives for her health only made her feel more uncomfortable. Their present niceness would surely intensify their future indignation.

Aside from this unfortunate 'opportunity', everything had been going well in Trimble. Even Marge had been made friendly to her—for a while at least—by her pregnancy, and had given her many things, found in the attic, that would be useful later on when the baby came. Old friends who had avoided Jack for a while now sought him out. He was popular again with shopkeepers, and the C.I.O. man had telephoned. Jack was already wondering what kind of religious training his future child should have. Gaby had calmed down; no longer talked of creating a public scandal. Dolores, whose grades at the mid-term exams had made it clear that she had not understood *anything* she had been studying, had left Trimble as unexpectedly and as unobtrusively as she had come. In the single letter Gaby had had from her she wrote of trying to get into the Juilliard, which of course would be much better for her. She had been treated badly by Hank, no doubt, though the details were unclear, but hadn't she rather asked for it? That sort of mess took two. Gaby now saw the pointlessness of any protest; her clear French mind had reasserted itself. Poor Dolores was a true unfortunate, and some of her unhappiness might be no fault of her own, but on the other hand she had shown an abnormal appetite for self-destruction. In any case, one had to be extremely tough-minded to get anything done at all, and Augusta had two important jobs before her, and much as she wanted to give in to her sympathies, she was not going to let anything stand in the way of her prior loyalties to her unborn child and her painting. The painting had been going well lately. The

greater part of humanity was fully as unfortunate as Dolores, and if one gave it the sympathy it deserved, one got nothing done at all. An almost unbearable decision had to be taken, or one joined the ranks of the unfortunates. Effective action was impossible without some cruelty.

But Jack was at least as tough-minded as she, and he was behaving as ruthlessly towards her as she had behaved towards Dolores. The Dean's introduction had been brief, and now Jack was on his feet and obviously enjoying his chance to have an audience of young people before him again. There must have been almost a thousand of them in the hall, and he was showing new skill in getting their attention. In a sense he was competing with his son for their allegiance, and already, though heavily handicapped by his honesty and his seriousness, he was demonstrating the lessons that one of the children of light had learned during the election campaign from the children of this world. Also, new mental powers were in evidence that he had gained during many hard physical labours. Without sacrificing any of his inveterate scrupulousness of thought and phrasing, he had gained enormously in effectiveness. Later his effort was sure to meet with disappointment, because it avoided any kind of demagoguery, and after all he was silently competing with one of the best natural demagogues that that community had ever produced. A few seconds of reckless political talent on Hank's part, of appeals to community passions, and all his father's delicate perceptiveness, soundness, breadth, health, religious and scientific devotion to unborn truth would be remembered by only a handful of the students who now surrendered momentarily to civilised skills. Primitivism could snatch the victory any time it wanted, because even in a hall of learning there was more primitivism than its despised opposite.

And Jack knew this, of course; had known it long before he started to speak. And yet he spoke. All his cunning was sure in the long run to be wasted, to be ridiculed, and yet he poured it out. And enjoyed it. What fun he was having!

His cheeks were ruddy, and he looked as happy as he did when he was dancing.

What fun Hank was *not* having! When he had welcomed her to the auditorium he had been entirely self-composed, which meant smooth, nerveless, resourceful. Now he cracked his knuckles irritatingly as his father's speech became steadily more pointed, and when she quickly glanced sidewise at his face, still that of an alert college boy, though getting lined prematurely, he was plainly scowling. Brent, on the other hand, was merely listening more intently—no longer slouched in an unexpectant, church-going attitude but sitting up straight.

"... The Founder of this college," Jack had been saying, "was considered a radical in his day. Today we realise how deeply conservative he was. And we no longer dishonour him by saying so. A few years ago the word 'conservative' was almost synonymous with 'reactionary' or 'economic royalist'. Now, however, it is acquiring a dignity it has not had in the United States for a very long time. This is happening because our rôle in international affairs has changed abruptly within a few years. Also, because new scientific and philosophic and literary thought has called into question a great deal of sentimental self-deception that formerly passed as 'liberalism'.

"... We are a boy king, in a murderous palace, whose father has died unexpectedly. Either we are going to learn how to rule—and learn very soon—or we are going to lose almost as quickly as we got it the power that we did *not* seek, did not want, and yet must keep if we are to keep life itself. Hence our rapid change of attitude toward that word 'conservative'. Hence the many similar changes that are taking place in our ways of thought and our ways of life. We are *re-thinking everything*. We have to—or perish. Every tradition we have is inadequate, including the revolutionary tradition, and the detached, paradoxical tradition.

"Whenever there is a great social change there are those who take advantage of it. I won't list the political adventurers of the past who have been quick to exploit earlier

social upheavals. We'll have a hard enough time dealing with the dangerous opportunists who live among us here and now. Foremost among these, I think, are our so-called 'new conservatives'. They are united, so far as I can see, by only one characteristic that they all have in common: their complete lack of conservatism of thought, of tradition, of phraseology, of aim, of or method. They have nothing in common with true conservatives, though they often make true conservatives, those at least who have grown weary of the struggle all around them, their dupes.

"They have managed to make irresponsibility and lack of intelligence seem conservative. All too often they have succeeded in fooling some of the most solid members of the community. Their strategy, you see, is the offer of peace—of a peace of mind that can never be expected by any healthy mind so long as it is——"

In spite of herself, much as she regretted every word she listened to, much as she dreaded the new conflicts that surely lay ahead, Augusta found herself enjoying, to her surprise, this *aria da capo*. Jack was singing the same song all over again, with a somewhat better voice than the last time; plunging them once more, surely, into ostracism and sore disappointment; and her enthusiasm was rising. She couldn't control it. She was hearing a *sursum corda*, and her heart was indeed being lifted up. She disregarded the growing hostility that sat on either side of her, that might some day again threaten the life that she carried within her. She leaned forward eagerly to catch every word, to find fault here, to have reservations there, to agree on the whole, to make suggestions later on, to join up too in a necessary war that never came to an end.